MAY 1997 · VOLUME 4 · NO. 2

inks

CARTOON AND COMIC ART STUDIES

1876.

AMERICANS!

REMEMBER, WE ARE NOT UPON THE EVE OF A REVOLUTION.

REMEMBER, GENERAL GRANT *IS* PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

REMEMBER THAT BUCHANAN *IS NOT* PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

REMEMBER, THERE ARE NO TRAITORS IN THE CABINET NOW.

REMEMBER THAT IT IS THE COUNTRY WHICH IS AT STAKE, AND NOT GAMBLERS' POOLS.

REMEMBER THAT WE DON'T SCARE WORTH A CENT, AND IF HAYES IS ELECTED, HE *SHALL* BE INAUGURATED.

"The 'Solid South' has gone for TILDEN and HENDRICKS, and, by the God of battles, they shall be inaugurated!"—*Evansville (Ind.) Courier (Dem.)*.

"To see and dare and decide; to be a fixed pillar in the welter of uncertainty."

THOS. CARLYLE.

[That's U. S. GRANT.]

THE $OLID $OUTH MUST BE WATCHED OR THEY WILL PREY
REFORM IS NECESSARY AND WE MUST WATCH THAT IT IS CARRIED OUT IN GOOD FAITH.
MONUMENT TO HONOR(?) OF ADAMS FALL. BOSTON MASS.
"The Democratic plan of counting the vote seems to have been this: Don't wait for any returns, but manufacture figures enough to establish a plausible claim. Then, if the actual returns don't agree with the figures, a basis is secured upon which to shout 'fraud.' Then sell 'fraud' till the last minute."—*N. Y. Tribune.*

NO REST FOR THE WICKED—SENTENCED TO MORE HARD LABOR.

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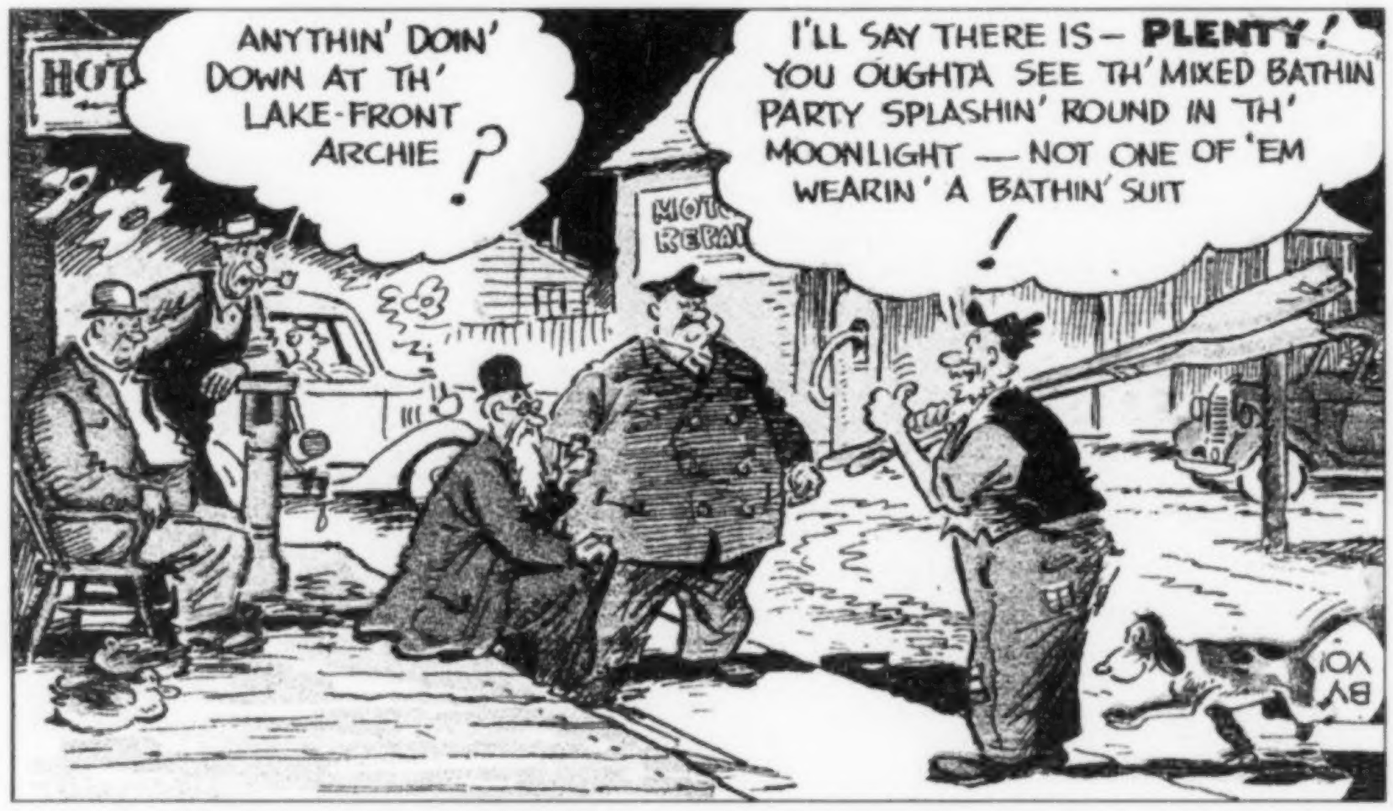
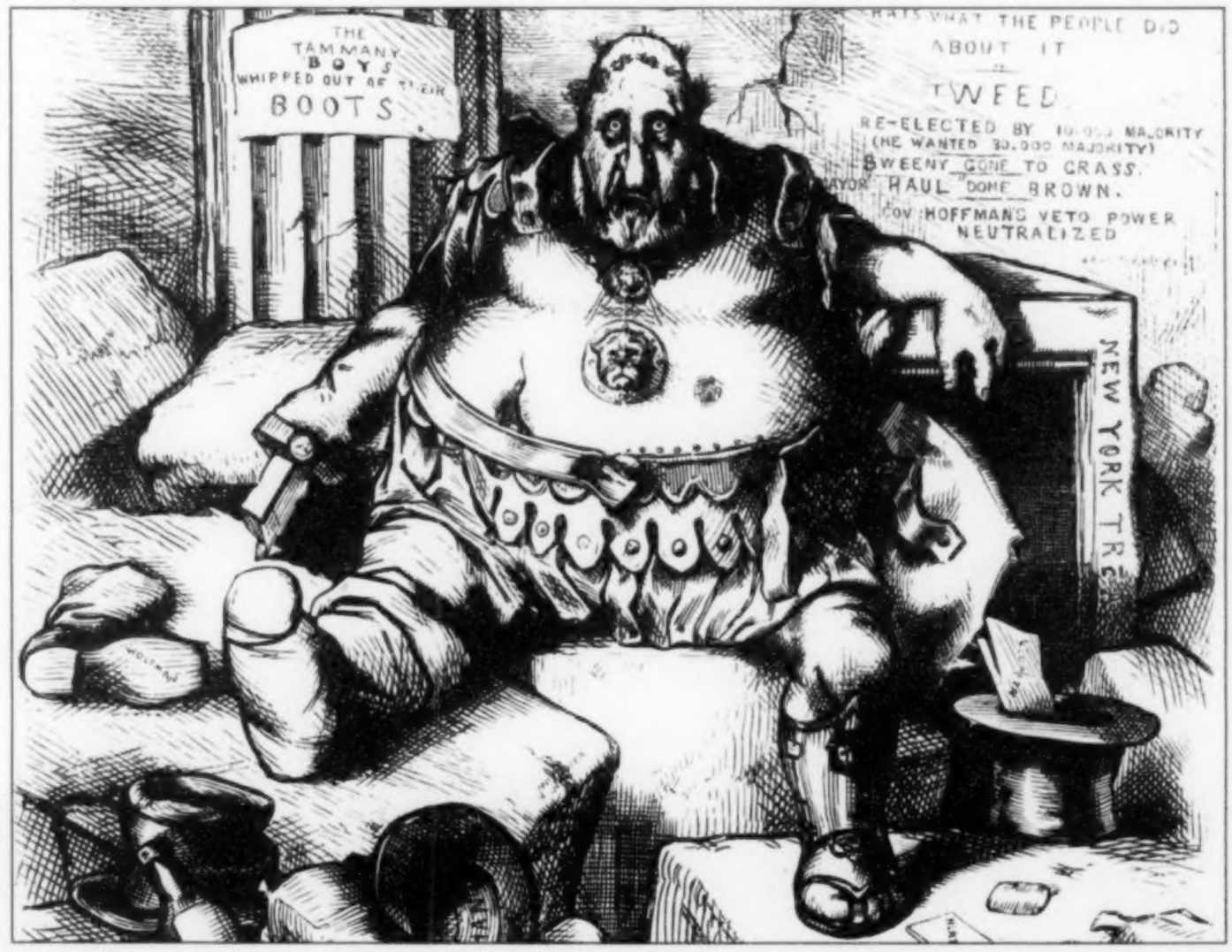
YOU COULD ALWAYS BURN THE TREE DOWN...
GET OUT OF HERE!! IT'S NOT FUNNY!!!
TSK, DIANA...
IT'S NOT DIGNIFIED FOR A LADY TO BE HOLLERING IN THE STREET, DIANA. TSK TSK...
WHAT..?
OH, THEN IF I START CLIMBING TREES THERE'S A CHANCE I MIGHT BE MISTAKEN FOR THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND?
WE MUST TRY TO MAINTAIN WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR DIGNITY AMIDST THE HOLOCAUST TO COME, DIANA. EVEN IF WE WIND UP ON OUR KNEES!


ANYTHIN' DOIN' DOWN AT TH' LAKE-FRONT ARCHIE?
I'LL SAY THERE IS— PLENTY! YOU OUGHTA SEE TH' MIXED BATHIN' PARTY SPLASHIN' ROUND IN TH' MOONLIGHT — NOT ONE OF 'EM WEARIN' A BATHIN' SUIT!


THE TAMMANY BOYS WHIPPED OUT OF THEIR BOOTS
THAT'S WHAT THE PEOPLE DID ABOUT IT
TWEED
RE-ELECTED BY 10,000 MAJORITY (HE WANTED 30,000 MAJORITY)
SWEENY GONE TO GRASS.
MAYOR HAUL DONE BROWN.
GOV. HOFFMAN'S VETO POWER NEUTRALIZED
NEW YORK TRE

MAY 1997 · VOLUME 4 · NO. 2

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The cover illustration by Thomas Nast was first published as the cover for *Harper's Weekly*, 2 December 1876.

letters

David J. A. Sims, president of Big City Comics, Inc. declined to give permission for images from the comic book Brotherman *to be reprinted as illustrations for the article "Black is the Color of My Comic Book Character" by Christian Davenport that was published in* Inks *volume 4, number 1 (February 1997). In doing so, he expressed following concerns:*

In "Black Is the Color of My Comic Book Character" by Christian Davenport, our publication *Brotherman* is described as using "little intelligence." Although there are other statements throughout the article that do not seem well researched, my primary concern is that our publication is misrepresented. Professor Davenport should have been aware of the impact not only of this publication but of our company as a whole has had since its inception in 1990. The writer, Guy A. Sims, has been praised in newspapers, magazines and broadcast media nationwide and abroad for the level of insight and intelligence in *Brotherman: Dictator of Discipline*. Big City Comics set a new standard as a Black-owned and operated business in the comic book scene that was and still is dominated by Europeans.

As one of the owners of this publication I am personally offended when I read articles that reduce the historical impact that our company has made and is continuing to make to this day. I cannot make Professor Davenport rewrite his article or change his opinion, but I can decline to have our images associated with his views.

There is an error in the bibliography of this article when *Brotherman* #1 is dated 1991. The correct date is 7 April 1990, the first printing. The 1991 date is a reprint.

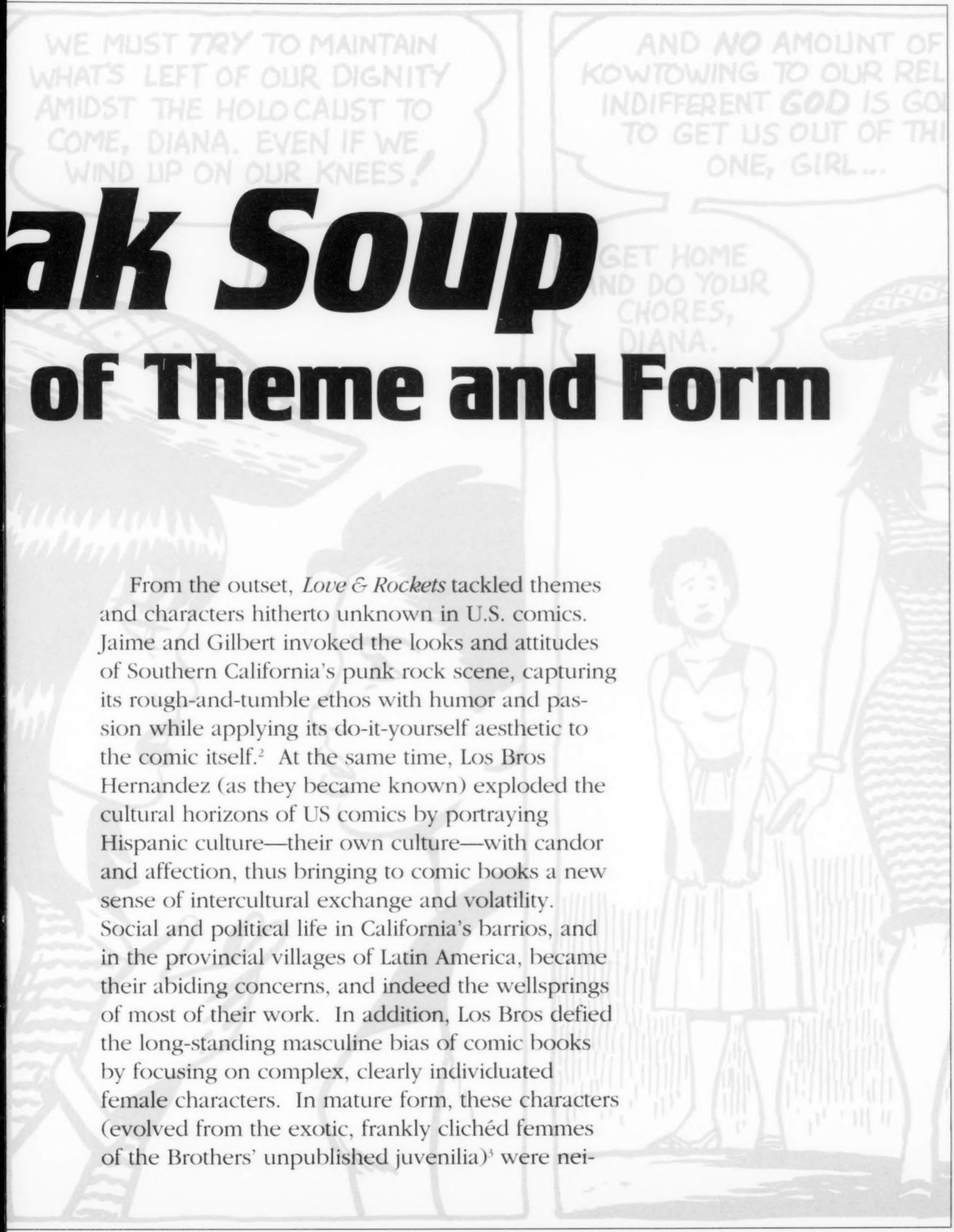
Sincerely,
David J. A. Sims
President
Big City Comics, Inc.

Heartbre

The Interdependence

BY CHARLES HATFIELD

Between its launch in 1981 and its fissioning into separate projects in 1996, the comics anthology *Love & Rockets*, created by brothers Gilbert, Jaime and (occasionally) Mario Hernandez, broke new ground for comic books in terms of both content and form.[1] Fusing underground and mainstream traditions, *Love & Rockets* at first built on such shopworn genres as science fiction, superheroics and romance. It quickly transcended these conventions, revitalizing the comic book not only with new themes and character types, but also with new approaches to narrative technique. Indeed, the formal and thematic innovations of *Love & Rockets* are of a piece: *what* the series has to say and *how* it goes about saying it are necessarily, inextricably, bound together. In particular, Gilbert's story cycle *Heartbreak Soup* epitomizes this interpenetration of theme and form—and thus reveals the comic book's potential to evoke complex settings and confront challenging social issues.


WE MUST TRY TO MAINTAIN WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR DIGNITY AMIDST THE HOLOCAUST TO COME, DIANA. EVEN IF WE WIND UP ON OUR KNEES!
AND NO AMOUNT OF KOWTOWING TO OUR REL INDIFFERENT GOD IS GO TO GET US OUT OF THI ONE, GIRL...
GET HOME ND DO YOUR CHORES, DIANA.

ak Soup of Theme and Form

From the outset, *Love & Rockets* tackled themes and characters hitherto unknown in U.S. comics. Jaime and Gilbert invoked the looks and attitudes of Southern California's punk rock scene, capturing its rough-and-tumble ethos with humor and passion while applying its do-it-yourself aesthetic to the comic itself.[2] At the same time, Los Bros Hernandez (as they became known) exploded the cultural horizons of US comics by portraying Hispanic culture—their own culture—with candor and affection, thus bringing to comic books a new sense of intercultural exchange and volatility. Social and political life in California's barrios, and in the provincial villages of Latin America, became their abiding concerns, and indeed the wellsprings of most of their work. In addition, Los Bros defied the long-standing masculine bias of comic books by focusing on complex, clearly individuated female characters. In mature form, these characters (evolved from the exotic, frankly clichéd femmes of the Brothers' unpublished juvenilia)[3] were nei-

ther glamorized nor caricatured, and as such broke with the fetishism of both mainstream comics, with their feverish romanticism, and underground comix, with their corrosive satire. These refreshing thematic innovations—the punk milieu, the Brothers' willingness to explore their cultural roots, and their regard for women characters—inspired steadfast loyalty among the magazine's readership.[4]

At times this loyalty was sorely tested by the Brothers' innovative approach to narrative structure. *Love & Rockets* demanded much of its audience, as its storylines were often serialized over many issues, creating long, sometimes novel-length, narratives of unprecedented depth and scope. In fact the stories grew in length and complexity throughout the 1980s, climaxing between 1990 and 1993 as *Love & Rockets* ran no fewer than three serialized graphic novels at once (a period Gilbert has described in hindsight as "crazy").[5] Such extended stories added new layers of meaning and complication to the Brothers' respective fictional cycles: Jaime's open-ended series *Locas*, based on the lives of several young women in "Hoppers 13" (a barrio implicitly modeled on the Brothers' own home town of Oxnard, California); and Gilbert's epic *Heartbreak Soup*, based in the fictional Central American village of Palomar but including various locales in Latin America and California. These vast, densely-populated cycles, built up over the fifty issues of *Love & Rockets*, represent the comics form at its most ambitious.

This ambition is a matter not simply of scale but of formal daring. For if *Love & Rockets* has extended the thematic range of comics, it has also, necessarily, pioneered new approaches to the comic book's most basic units of meaning: the panel and the page. Comics scholarship, newly armed with the formalist vocabulary of such critics as Robert C. Harvey, Scott McCloud and Will Eisner,[6] has just begun to pay attention to such formal developments, and the work of Los Bros suggests a new horizon, or new problem, for inquiry: the intrinsic relation between form and content. If both Gilbert and Jaime have used the tools of comics (*e.g.*, style, composition, and panel-to-panel continuity) to pack as much meaning as possible into their work, it is because the thematic content of the work encourages, even demands, such formal sophistication. The thematic and formal riches of *Love & Rockets* are inseparable—particularly in *Heartbreak Soup*, which, in its emphasis on the town of Palomar as a distinct entity, demands much from both creator and reader.

Heartbreak Soup is about a place as well as the people who inhabit it. As such, it focuses on the development of the community as well as the individual, in contrast to the agonistic individualism which has traditionally dominated comic book fantasy. Whereas most comic books favor lone heroes who have been clearly set apart from society, Gilbert's stories acknowledge, even depend upon, the energy and variety of social life. More specifically, they emphasize the always complex relationship between personal anxieties and desires and social constraints, opportunities, and frictions. For Gilbert, individual psychology and communal interaction go hand in hand: insofar as *Heartbreak Soup* is about desire and disappointment (as its title suggests), it argues that such feelings are gregarious. Indeed, individual depth and social breadth, held in balance, account for much of the work's appeal. No other series in contemporary American comics features a cast as large, or as complexly interrelated, and few

"I HAD A PRETTY NICE FIGURE ONCE...FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES. I WAS SEVENTEEN..."
"YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN BEAUTIFUL, LUBA. YOUR PROBLEM IS THAT YOU KNOW IT, 'CAUSE GUYS LIKE ME NEVER LET YOU FORGET IT."
"TCH. ARCHIE, YOU MEN ARE ALL SUCH GREAT BULLSHITTERS TO THE END..."
JUST AS I SUSPECTED! THAT TRAIN'S PULLING TANKS AND STUFF. CAN'T TELL IF IT'S THE U.S. OR THE SOVIETS, BUT WE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH..!
TONANTZIN, PLEASE COME DOWN FROM THERE!
YOU COULD ALWAYS BURN THE TREE DOWN...
GET OUT OF HERE!! IT'S NOT FUNNY!!!
TSK, DIANA...
IT'S NOT DIGNIFIED FOR A LADY TO BE HOLLERING IN THE STREET, DIANA. TSK TSK...
WHAT.?
OH, THEN IF I START CLIMBING TREES THERE'S A CHANCE I MIGHT BE MISTAKEN FOR THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND?
WE MUST TRY TO MAINTAIN WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR DIGNITY AMIDST THE HOLOCAUST TO COME, DIANA. EVEN IF WE WIND UP ON OUR KNEES!
AND NO AMOUNT OF KOWTOWING TO OUR RELIABLY INDIFFERENT GOD IS GOING TO GET US OUT OF THIS ONE, GIRL...
GET HOME AND DO YOUR CHORES, DIANA.

Smooth transitions show the links between social relationships in Palomar. A crucial scene from *Human Diastrophism*, 17-19. Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

focus so resolutely on the complications of life among family, friends and community. The beauty of *Heartbreak Soup* (as of brother Jaime's *Locas*, but to an even greater degree) lies not simply in its colorful individual characters, but also in the depth and unpredictability of their interaction.

Given this focus on social life, *Heartbreak Soup* demands a new approach to comics storytelling—and indeed Gilbert synthesized such an approach, from the raw materials of comic books, comic strips, folklore and film. Spurred by, and in turn spurring, brother Jaime's efforts, Gilbert developed a distinctive repertoire of techniques, perfectly suited to the kind of stories he wants to tell. The formal challenge *Heartbreak Soup* presents is daunting: how to focus on subtle, often unspoken emotions and relationships, without sacrificing the energy of social interaction or freighting the comics page with too much verbiage. Emotional clarity is essential, but brisk movement is a must, too. Gilbert's approach tackles this problem in three main ways: first, through his drawings of characters, which, while often broadly stylized, nonetheless capture subtle nuances of expression and body language; second, through compositions which place his characters in a dynamic social context; and third, through sudden panel-to-panel transitions which allow him to cover long distances (spatially and temporally) between subjects, without losing coherence. None of these strategies, of course, can be said to originate with Gilbert Hernandez, but his combination of them is radical in degree and intensity, born out of the complex narrative problems he has to solve.

The first point, Hernandez's drawings of characters, boils down to a matter of both style (*i.e.*, the degree of abstraction) and technique (*i.e.*, the finesse of the rendering).[7] The latter, technique, does not lend itself easily to criticism, though it influences meaning as surely as handwriting influences our sense of a written message. The former, style, offers more room for analysis. At the very least, we should observe that Hernandez's style, though superficially plain, is complex insofar as it reconciles naturalism with caricatural abstraction.[8] In fact Hernandez employs a sliding scale of realism, drawing some characters, such as children or comi-

IT WOULD MEAN THE END OF OUR INNOCENCE, SHERIFF CHELO...
THE ONLY INNOCENT PERSON IN THIS WORLD IS A SUCKLING BABE, ALCALDE.
IT WOULD HELP US OUT A LOT IN EMERGENCIES AND SUCH, CHUY. A PHONE HOOKED UP TO THIS TOWN WOULD ALSO BRING US RESPECT. INSTANT EQUALITY WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD AT THE TWIRL OF A DIAL...
AN INSTANT END TO OUR PRIVACY, CHELO. I KNOW OF STRONGER CULTURES THAT WERE CRUSHED BY THE INVASION OF FASHION AND CONSUMERISM AND ROCK N' ROLL...
YOU'VE SAID YOURSELF THAT YOU WANT TO PRESERVE THE DIGNITY OF OUR PEOPLE THROUGH THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN. FINE. WELL, I WANT TO KEEP OUR CULTURE AND HERITAGE INTACT.
THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS A STINKING DYING ELEPHANT AND TO BECOME DIRECTLY LINKED WITH IT WOULD MEAN OUR END AS WELL...
FSH...
YOU TALK AS IF COMMUNICATION ITSELF WERE EVIL. YOU AND I WON'T LOSE ANY CONTROL OVER WHAT COMES IN AND OUT OF HERE, I PROMISE YOU THAT. WELL... AT LEAST THINK ABOUT THAT PHONE, HUH?
AND THERE SHE GOES, HUMBERTO. I HOPE YOU WERE THROUGH...
SEÑOR CALDERON! I--DIDN'T SEE YOU STANDING THERE...
WELL, I FIGURED YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE LET ME WATCH IF YOU KNEW I WAS HERE. LET'S HAVE A LOOK, CHAGALL.
OH, BUT-BUT IT'S NOT VERY GOOD, UUH... IT'S ONLY, UH, PRACTICE... I CAN'T DRAW PEOPLE LIKE REAL... UH, HEH...
NOW HOLD ON... HUMBERTO. I KNEW YOU DREW A LITTLE, BUT THIS IS SOMETHING! WHERE DID YOU LEARN ABOUT... WELL, REAL ART?
UH... WHEN I WAS LITTLE... I USED TO WATCH THESE PEOPLE COME TO, LIKE, DRAW AND PAINT THE OCEAN OR THE STATUES OUTSIDE TOWN, OR UH... WELL, I JUST LIKED WHAT THEY WERE DOING...
SO YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT ARTISTS LIKE RIVERA, SIQUEIROS, UH, PICASSO, VAN GOGH, VAN GOGH MIGHT BE MY FAVORITE; MUNCH, TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, CHEEZ, THERE MUST BE DOZENS... VERMEER, MATISSE, REMBRANDT--
WELL, SHIT, YOU'RE IN FOR A TREAT, HUMBERTO! I'M GOING TO LEND YOU SOME PICTURE BOOKS OF MINE...
UH... NO, I DON'T THINK... ALL THOSE PEOPLE DRAW?
HEY HUMBERTO!
LET ME SEE YOUR PRETTY DRAWING, HUMBERCITO...
TSK, NAW, NAW--! IT'S JUST PRACTICE, IT'S NOT READY..! NO...!
AUGUSTIN...!
ALCALDE- AWL' CALL DEH I MAYOR
HAW HAW-- WHAT A BIG PUTA! IF I EVER CATCH HIM!...
IF I EVER CATCH YOU CATCHING HIM, I'LL--
?
SHE IS NOT, YOU STUPID HEADS!!
IS SO! HOW COME YOU DON'T HAVE A DADDY THEN, GUADALUPE?? HUH--?
YEAH, GUADALUPE! ALL YOUR SISTERS HAVE DIFFERENT FATHERS TOO...
!
MY MOM'S WAY BETTER'N YOUR MOMS AND YOUR DADS, TOO, STUPID-HEADS!!
NO SHE'S NOT-- NO SHE'S NOT-- NO SHE'S NOT-
AND I SHOULD KNOW BECAUSE I'M GUADALUPE'S FATHER--!
HEEYAAAAAAa!
OK OK, THOSE MEAN OL' HEADS ARE GONE. DON'T LISTEN TO THEM.
I JUST TOLD THEM I WAS YOUR DAD SO THEY'D STOP. I'M A FRIEND OF YOUR MOM, GUADALUPE...
MY MOM'S THE BEST MOM IN THE WHOLE WORLD.
I KNOW SHE IS, SWEETHEART, I KNOW...
OH, DORALIS! AGAIN?! DORALIS, YOU'RE TOO BIG TO BE DOING THIS SO OFTEN!
:HAUGH!:
CHIT CHIT
NOW YOU GET IN THAT TUB AND DON'T SPLASH. YOUR MOTHER WILL BE HOME SOON AND--STOP MAKING THOSE MONKEY SOUNDS!
CHIT CHIT
OH..! SEÑOR CALDERON! GUADALUPE, WHAT..?
OH, IT'S OK. SEÑORA BELTRAN. GUADALUPE AND I HAVE JUST DECIDED THAT WE JUST CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS.
THE RESEMBLANCE IS... WELL, LUBA'S GOING TO HAVE TO TELL THEM BOTH SOONER OR LATER... OR I WILL MYSELF...
SEÑOR CALDERON IS A NICE MAN, ISN'T HE, GUADALUPE?
NOT AS NICE AS LOOKIN' AT YOU STARK RAVING BUCK NAKED, GIRL!

cal stock characters, broadly and wildly, but other characters, such as many of the prominent adults in Palomar, in a restrained, naturalistic way. Such inconsistency is native to the art of cartooning, but Hernandez goes further, at times drawing even his most realistic characters with cartoony abandon, especially when they are in the grip of strong feelings like fear or rage (a technique widely practiced among Japanese comics artists but less common in the U.S.).[9]

But it is the second and third points, Hernandez's compositions and panel-to-panel transitions, which most demand study. Composition, as Harvey reminds us, refers to the arrangement of pictorial elements within a single comic-book image, or panel.[10] Inasmuch as such arrangement determines the relative importance of elements within the panel, composition can define the relationships between characters, props and settings, and thus cue our emotional involvement. Here, as Harvey argues, the critical argot of cinema may prove useful, for despite the inescapable and profound differences between comics and film, the logic of the filmic "shot" can often be used to describe precisely the placement of elements within the panel.[11] Though film theory is not an inevitable (nor indeed always a useful) tool for comics criticism, in the case of Hernandez it proves helpful, since he has acknowledged film as a major influence on his work—and indeed his stories invoke the movie camera's capacity for intimacy, naturalism and movement.[12] In *Heartbreak Soup* the relationships among characters, and between each character and Palomar itself, must be established and upheld with absolute clarity; hence, Hernandez's compositions favor cinematic devices which position his characters in close relation both to the reader and to each other: extreme close-ups, close two-shots, foreground framing and deep focus.[13]

Individual close-ups and two-shots enable Hernandez to capture his characters' most intense emotions, whether openly displayed or barely concealed behind carefully-composed facades. The individual close-up allows such recurrent devices as direct asides to the reader (used sparingly in the

CHIT CHIT
--I WANT THIS AREA CLEARED OUT! GET THESE GODDAMN DEMONS OUT OF HERE!
BAW!
CHIT CHIT CHIT
--PLEASE COME WITH ME, SEÑOR?
I'M GONNA MISS THIS DUMP.. SIGH--
GIVE ME AN HOUR..
CHIT CHIT CHIT
SHE'LL EAT NOW, GIRLS...THANKS FOR EVERYTHING...
HAAUGGH--
CHIT CHIT
WELL, BORRO.. HUFF-HUFF-- WAS IT WORTH THE WAIT, YOU FUCKING PIG..?
--WOULD LIKE A FEW WORDS WITH YOU, KID..
CHIT CHIT
CHIT CHIT

Abrupt transitions reflect the growing chaos in Palomar. A key sequence from *Human Diastrophism*, 76-78. Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

early tales and later abandoned) and blank, silent panels revealing lone characters in unguarded moments of reaction or contemplation—still moments which, in a strip whose principals are usually shown in brisk motion, serve as dramatic punctuation, offering revealing snapshots of individual characters.[14] Similarly, the two-shot captures intimate exchanges, whether fierce, gentle, humorous, or erotic. In particular, what I call the vis-à-vis shot (that is, a close-up of two characters in profile) stresses the mutuality of the exchange by giving equal emphasis to both parties.

Foreground framing reinforces this sense of intimacy, and serves the added purpose of strengthening our sense of continuity during exchanges which extend over several panels. The effect resembles a cinematic shot/reverse shot exchange (*i.e.*, a tête-à-tête in which shots alternate from one character's viewpoint to another's). In each panel, the "framing" of one figure by another (or part of another) in the near foreground reminds us of the physical relationship between the figures and implies a larger space or world "outside" the panels. In such exchanges, Hernandez frequently uses silhouetting, filling the outline of the foreground character with black to simplify the composition and direct the reader's eye to the main figure. Like the close two-shot, foreground framing insists on the relationship, at once spatial and emotional, between the characters, and lends visual variety to what could otherwise become repetitive, numbing sequences full of talking heads.

Hernandez's use of deep focus emphasizes the complexity of the larger social milieu of Palomar. Deep focus (here used in a metaphorical sense) refers to compositions in which elements in the near foreground and in the far background are equally clear, specific, and significant, so that the viewer can apprehend both at once without any loss of clarity or information. In deep focus, the spatial relationships between two or more pictorial elements are heightened, even insisted on, and interactions can take place across wide distances. The "space" between foreground and background characters can establish the complexity of a setting, or underscore the emotions of an interchange (*e.g.*, characters shouting angrily across a distance, or keeping their distance from each other). *Heartbreak Soup* is in fact filled with panels in which elements on different planes are unobtrusively combined—sometimes to a specific narrative purpose, often simply to evoke the variety and unpredictability of Palomar as a place. Hernandez's deployment of deep focus creates, not only a spatial, but also a social background. If Palomar does come to life as a place, as a thoroughly imagined and imaginable world, it is partly because Hernandez's multi-plane compositions provide the perfect graphic setting for his emphasis, as writer, on the community itself.

Thus Hernandez's compositions respond to the thematic thrust of his stories. Yet the influence of his interest in community goes further, touching on that aspect of comics which Scott McCloud has highlighted as definitive: the manipulation of closure (*i.e.*, our inference of logical connections, whether spatial, temporal, functional, or thematic, between disjointed parts—in this case, between successive images in a comic).[15] In comics, to achieve closure is to figure out the most logical link between one panel and the next; to manipulate closure is to influence that process of figuring out, whether through

Transitions without signals, capturing Palomar in the wake of crisis. The final page of "Duck Feet," *Love & Rockets* 18 (September 1986). Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

Framing and silhouetting help position characters in relation to each other. *Love & Rockets* 10 (March 1985). Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

verbal cues, the graphic design of the page, or the content and composition of the images themselves (or some combination of these). Properly speaking, closure refers to the inferential work a reader does to turn a series of panels into a sequence, while Harvey's term *narrative breakdown* more aptly describes how a cartoonist divides a narrative sequence into panels in the first place.[16] "Closure" and "breakdown," then, are complementary terms—closure describing the process of reading, breakdown describing the process of constructing. It is on the issue of panel-to-panel breakdown, thus defined, that Hernandez's narrative technique seems most radical.

Again, an analogy to cinema may prove helpful—but in this case it is the failure of the analogy which helps. As practiced by Hernandez, breakdown is roughly comparable to cinematic "cutting" or montage, but with the proviso that comics create meaning through static images laid out contiguously, in the form of a strip or page, unlike the successive frames of a film. The comics page gathers images into an overall graphic unit through which the reader may move at will, his or her pace of acquisition determined not by technological means but, as Will Eisner points out, by his or her own needs and interests.[17] *Heartbreak Soup* takes advantage of this, increasingly, as the series progresses. Though

deeply influenced by cinema, Hernandez begins to exceed the limits of film with abrupt "cuts" between images which, in film, would jeopardize narrative momentum and coherence—but which make perfect sense in the printed medium of the comics page (where, as McCloud points out, "past" and "future" remain ever-visible, ever-present, elements).[18] The static nature of comics permits a self-paced reading, slow or fast according to the reader's desires, even recursive if need be, which allows Hernandez to make jump cuts between panels without sacrificing the continuity or prevailing naturalism of his narrative. This technique, what Joseph Witek has termed (after McCloud) *uncued closure*, responds to, and grows more and more audacious with, the growing complexity of Hernandez's story cycle.[19] Combined with the compositional techniques of close-up, two-shot, foreground framing and deep focus, such abrupt, uncued "breakdowns" enable Hernandez to keep track of the overlapping relationships of his ever-expanding repertory company of characters.

Heartbreak Soup's emphasis on these relationships is evident from the very first. The inaugural story in the cycle, "Sopa de Gran Pena" (*Love & Rockets* 3-4, 1983) hinges on a tragic love triangle between Manuel, Soledad and Pipo. It also introduces the mysterious *bañadora*, Luba, and, especially, highlights the friendship between "the guys," a group of adolescent boys composed of Vicente, Satch, Israel, Jesus and the newcomer Heraclio. The adult lives of these men, covered in such later tales as "The Laughing Sun" and "Bullnecks and Bracelets," will account for much of *Heartbreak Soup*'s continuity, but in "Sopa" the relationships which bind the five together, and bind the reader to them, are only part of a larger network which includes not only the love triangle, but many other relationships (*e.g.*, Carmen and Pipo, Luba and Chelo) which will figure prominently in the cycle.

The complexity of such interlocking relationships becomes clear in the story "Ecce Homo" (*Love & Rockets* 10, 1984), which takes place at a town picnic or similar gathering, and shows how secure Hernandez's grasp of Palomar really is. Here Borro, the ex-sheriff of Palomar, reappears, virtually reinvented since his early appearance in "Sopa," and Tonantzin Villaseñor, only briefly glimpsed before, is reintroduced and her promiscuity and desperate need for self-affirmation revealed. The relationship between Pipo and her abusive husband Gato, an ironic reversal of his unrequited longings in "Sopa," brings added tension and complexity. The coterie of male friends established in "Sopa" remains more or less intact, apart from the convict Jesus, but their relationships have grown and changed, and in particular Heraclio's role has become more central. "Ecce Homo" is in fact a pageant of Palomar's citizenry, driven not by any particular plot or crisis but rather by the various relationships which Hernandez wants to establish, re-establish, or underline. As such, the story exploits Hernandez's arsenal of narrative techniques to the fullest.

Reading "Ecce Homo," one has the feeling of roving through a large party, encountering and later re-encountering various characters whose relationships are only beginning to come to light. Blending the disparate elements of *Heartbreak Soup*'s continuity into an organic whole, "Ecce" gives the town an aggregate identity of its own. The story allows us to stroll, as it were, through the scene, taking in relationships which connect the various characters to each other. Indeed, "Ecce" contains playful elements which suggest that Hernandez is not only taking roll, but taking stock of all that has happened in *Love and Rockets* thus far. Besides the cast of *Heartbreak Soup*, various characters drawn by brothers Jaime and Mario make cameos. In fact most of Jaime's major characters appear, as do a number of non-*Love and Rockets* "characters" (*e.g.*, Frida Kahlo, R. Crumb, Hernandez and his wife Carol, and several skeletons inspired by Jose Guadalupe Posada). Thus as we "stroll" through the Palomar scene, eavesdropping on its featured players, we also glimpse other visitors to this fictive world, fanciful visitors who remind us that we too are merely peeking into something larger and more complex. At once we are swept into the life of Palomar yet reminded of our visitor status.

"Ecce Homo" tells us much that we must know if we are to understand the relationships and issues at stake in later stories. Here for the first time, for instance, Luba's eldest daughter Maricela emerges as a distinct character, and we learn, albeit indirectly, of Luba's abuse. Here we witness Tonantzin falling prey to male flattery and in effect prostituting herself to shore up her uncertain sense of self-worth.[20] Here too we see Borro's crude advances on Luba, and his willingness to strike out violently when his desires are thwarted. Beneath the apparent frivolity of the cameos, and the drunken good humor of characters like Heraclio, there are undercurrents of tension, dark and disturbing aspects which will emerge most fully in later tales.

"Ecce Homo" represents a stretch for Hernandez the cartoonist, as it packs an entire town into sixteen pages. Here Hernandez's compositional and breakdown techniques are in constant practice, choreographing the interplay between at least two dozen established characters. Two-shots, foreground framing, silhouetting, shot/reverse shot exchanges and

deep-focus compositions depict the complex social workings of Palomar, with its mingled friendships, loves, lusts, antagonisms and misunderstandings. Throughout "Ecce Homo," Hernandez manages continuity of action, visual variety and emotional nuance, while positioning foreground and background details to suggest an impinging social context.

If "Ecce Homo" romps through Hernandez's imaginary world, then the two-part story "Duck Feet" (*Love & Rockets* 17-18, 1986) captures this world in crisis. Struck by an epidemic brought on by the wrath of a disgruntled *bruja* (witch), the Palomar of "Duck Feet" reveals a heretofore unknown potential for violence: Sheriff Chelo inadvertently kills the fugitive Roberto, and Tonantzin, acting as Chelo's deputy, is later assaulted by Roberto's gun-wielding cousin Geraldo. Meanwhile Luba remains stuck in the bottom of a hole, despite her daughter Guadalupe's anxious efforts to free her. As the epidemic sweeps the town, many characters

Panels crowd together as plotlines converge. The climax of "Duck Feet," *Love & Rockets* 18 (September 1986). Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

HE GOT MY GUN WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING 'CAUSE HE WANTED TO SHOOT YOU OR SOMETHING AND IT WOULD BE O.K. IF IT WAS THE EMPTY GUN YOU GAVE ME BUT I SWITCHED IT AND NOW IT'S LOADED OH GOD I'M SORRY
ALL RIGHT THEN, STUPID! FALL IN! GO AHEAD!
TONANTZIN, I KNEW YOU'D SWITCH GUNS.. SO I LEFT BOTH OF THEM EMPTY THE GUN HE HOLDS ISN'T LOADED!
WHAT... SHIT--
CLICK CLICK CLICK
AAAAA
PRAISE THE HOLY VIRGIN IN HER INFINITE WISDOM AND GRACE.

are physically transformed, their features grotesquely mottled, even distorted, by the symptoms of the disease. Several scenes take on a frankly nightmarish quality, as Guadalupe stumbles through the streets, retching and hallucinating. Here Hernandez's breakdowns seamlessly blend reality, memory, and vision, as when Guadalupe's fond memories of her mother give way to a frightening vision of Luba, which in turn gives way to the reality of Tonantzin shaking the bleary, vomiting child. Again, Hernandez's deployment of form echoes, in fact responds to, the dramatic demands of his narrative. As the scattered members of his cast all converge on the same moment of confrontation, his breakdowns grow more ambitious and the transitions more abrupt, juxtaposing subject to subject and action to action without warning. Narrow panels crowd together, creating a staccato rhythm which climaxes with discovery, violence, deliverance and relief.

The final page of "Duck Feet," a quiet dénouement after a frantic tale, is in its way as radical a formal move as anything that has come before. A simple grid of nine wordless panels, each one showing a different subject, suggests the apparent calm that has settled over Palomar in the wake of the epidemic, and tells us what has become of all of the featured characters in the story. Disconnected as the images are, they reveal what we need to know about each character and the town as a whole. In the first panel, for instance, we see the outside of Luba's house, where, we know, Luba and Guadalupe are convalescing, while in the second and third panels we see the rest of her family at work. Panels four and seven show the sisters, Tonantzin and Diana, respectively: Tonantzin, who has been changed most by recent events, seems abstracted in thought, unconcerned with the masculine brawl going on (no doubt for her benefit) behind her; Diana, for her part, seems to be running for the sake of escaping from her own thoughts. In the penultimate panel we see Geraldo, confined to prison, his bandaged arm a reminder of the violence that has gone before. The last panel, showing the retreat of the mysterious *bruja*, ends the tale on a question mark. Here closure is a matter of divining a pattern from a series of apparent non-sequiturs, silent and open to interpretation.

Thematically and formally, the novel-length *Human Diastrophism* (*Love & Rockets* 21-26, 1987-88) trumps "Duck Feet" by placing the town in the grips of an even greater crisis.[21] *Human Diastrophism* echoes the first Palomar story, "Sopa de Gran Pena," in many ways, recalling or reworking some of its basic themes and motifs. Unlike the bucolic setting of "Sopa," the Palomar of *Diastrophism* seethes with anxiety, its fragile community jeopardized by violence, political terror and disintegrating relationships. Here Hernandez creates his most complex network of interactions, pushing his techniques to the utmost to capture the way individual behavior affects the social dynamic. Indeed the crux of *Diastrophism* is the question of personal responsibility for the social good. Ironically much of its dramatic tension stems from characters who remain unaware of, or unmoved by, the needs of the community as a whole.[22]

Broadly speaking, *Diastrophism* depicts traumatic changes which overtake Palomar and its citizens, alterations triggered by the intrusion of the outside world into the previously cloistered village. The most obvious public crisis in the novel is the search for a serial killer whose random attacks strike up a panic in Palomar's intimate population. As the search for the killer gathers momentum and the panic escalates, a horde of mischievous monkeys appears out of nowhere and sweeps the town like an epidemic, attacking people and vandalizing houses. As omens of the encroachment of the modern world, the monkeys provide the population of Palomar with a cathartic outlet for, and welcome distraction from, its fears, hence the town's concerted effort to kill and cremate them. The resulting mayhem, at once risibly comic and brutally graphic, underscores the novel's prevailing tone of violence and hysteria.

Within this climate of terror, many of Palomar's individual citizens undergo diastrophic (literally, "earth-shaking") changes in their own lives. Most notably, Luba (by now familiar as a single mother of four and the proprietor of the local bathhouse) pursues her own fleeting youth in the person of Khamo, an old lover and the father of two of her children, who has returned to town unexpectedly as a worker in an archaeological dig (the same dig, incidentally, which has brought the killer to town). Luba's family, already strained by her neglect, begins to come apart at the seams as her affair with Khamo revives, then falters, shattering her self-confidence and driving her into a series of aimless sexual encounters. In particular, Luba's daughter Maricela, driven by her mother's violent abuse, plots to leave Palomar with Riri, with whom she has been pursuing a clandestine lesbian affair. Luba, oblivious to all but her own need for affirmation, remains aloof to Palomar's social crisis, unaware of the very complexities on which Hernandez's narrative technique insists.[23]

Meanwhile, Tonantzin worries her family and friends with prophetic talk of an impending holocaust. Set off by the paranoiac writings of the convict Geraldo (who assaulted her in "Duck Feet"), Tonantzin sees Palomar as a fragile pawn in a strug-

gle between global superpowers, and her mind is filled with images of the apocalypse. Despite the well-meaning interference of friends and family, Tonantzin adopts the traditional garb of her Indian ancestors in a vain effort to make a "political statement." Inadvertently, she too provides the townspeople with much-needed distraction, a bitter irony given her lone commitment to meaningful social action.

In contrast to Tonantzin, Humberto (a character newly introduced in this novel) implicitly rejects direct social action, seeking instead to take part in the life of the town obliquely, through the medium of his art. An aspiring young artist, Humberto struggles to educate himself, and indeed redefine himself, by mastering the craft of drawing.[24] It is Humberto and Luba, both emotionally isolated characters, who serve as the focal points for Hernandez's exploration of social responsibility. Neither seems aware of the ripples of consequence spreading from his/her actions. As Luba, regardless of the town's disintegration, struggles to salvage her confidence after losing her hold on Khamo, so Humberto tries desperately to improve his art and to define its social place and value, heedless of the chaos erupting around him. As Luba puts herself and her family at risk through her random sexual liaisons, so Humberto puts himself and others at risk through his single-minded dedication to his art.

Through Humberto, Hernandez questions the power of art to intervene in social and political crises, and probes the issue of the artist's social liability. As artist, Humberto becomes an unwitting accomplice to the murderer stalking the town. While eavesdropping with his drawing tablet in hand, he witnesses the killer Tomaso's attempted murder of the young woman Chancla. Rather than coming forward to testify as to what he has seen, he withdraws into a world of his own, compelled to replay the event over and over in his drawings. Humberto's art becomes his world. It is an ugly world indeed, as we see when Luba, stood up by Khamo, ducks into Humberto's house to escape from the drizzling rain. When Luba remarks that his art is "ugly as hell," Humberto replies curtly, "How else to you expect someone to draw hell." Goaded by Luba's intrusion, he declares, "I don't care about anyone—!", thus rejecting any form of human connection, any personal responsibility to the townspeople, the very subjects of his art.[25] By this point he has completely withdrawn from social contact.

His rejection of human contact has a dire effect on himself and the community. Though Humberto alone possesses the secret of the killer's identity, he cannot or at least does not divulge it, choosing instead to paper the town with drawings of the killer, in hopes that his work will testify for him. When confronted with his drawings, he refuses to explicitly identify the culprit, claiming, "My work speaks for itself."[26] Obsessed with being a great artist, Humberto cannot intervene directly in the public crisis, but tries to influence events through his drawings alone, guided by his belief that "great art reveals the deepest truths."[27] Unfortunately, his refusal to testify verbally allows Tomaso to go free, and to kill others. Thus Humberto's art is inadequate to stem the chaos and social collapse taking place around him. Ultimately, Humberto becomes a pariah, cast out of Hernandez's carefully-constructed society for his refusal to act. Through Humberto, then, Hernandez attacks the artist's traditional presumptive role as a marginal or elevated social observer, and questions the social efficacy of art itself.

If *Human Diastrophism*, ultimately, is a meditation on the power or impotence of art as a social instrument, it is also a supremely rigorous test of comics' ability to represent the complexities of social interaction—not to mention a bravura exercise of Hernandez's narrative skills. In fact its very form insists on the social connectedness which Humberto tries to deny. Thus, as the novel progresses, its formal rhythms become more intense, its breakdowns bolder and more elaborate, in response to the town's mounting hysteria. In the novel's last third, having established the overlapping relationships among the characters, Hernandez shifts gears rapidly, jumping from one relationship or plotline to the next. Again, the community of Palomar becomes a character in its own right, a complex organism in which all sorts of reactions are taking place.

Early in the novel, Hernandez uses subtle, relatively easy transitions from panel to panel, subject to subject, in order to show the essential connectedness of all the goings-on in Palomar. Narrative economy is the byword here. For instance, in a twenty-panel sequence early in the novel (spanning pages 17 to 19), Hernandez reintroduces a number of significant characters, establishes several relationships and plotlines which will propel the novel, and underlines some of the essential themes which will give it its peculiar resonance. He does all this without once making a sudden shift from scene to scene. Instead he follows several characters through the streets of Palomar, easing the reader from one encounter to the next by varying depth and perspective, and by repositioning key characters with respect to each other.

The sequence in question begins, significantly, with Tonantzin silhouetted in the top of a tree, watching a train go by in the distance (middle, page 17). Her sister Diana's pleas prompt Tonantzin to

ALL RIGHT, GUADALUPE... TSK MARICELA, COME HERE!
BOO HOO SNIFF
OH, SHIT THIS IS IT. I'M DEAD AND IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY!
TSK! ... WANTED ... W TH ... AND ... FRIENDS! ... ON, DEMONA! ... W TH YOUR FRIENDS. BUT BEHAVE, MARICELA!
O OK, MOM
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! SHE DIDN'T SMACK YOU!
LUCKY!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE SHE CHANGES HER MIND!
GONNA TAKE CARE OF MARICELA WHEN YOU GET HOME, LUBA?
PIPO! I ALMOST DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU! HEY...
SERGIO, SAY HELLO TO SEÑORA LUBA..
NOW ISN'T HE THE LADY-KILLER ALREADY!
HELLO
GIRL, YOU LOOK LIKE A MILLION BUCKS! AND YOUR HUSBAND GATO..?
SWEETHEART, WHY DON'T YOU GO PLAY WHILE SEÑORA LUBA AND MOTHER HAVE A LITTLE TALK?
GOD, BUT HE LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE HIS FATHER MANUEL HOW DOES GATO FEEL?
WELL, GATO HATED MANUEL, YOU KNOW BUT HE ACCEPTS SERGIO NOW. I, EH, HAVE ALREADY TOLD SERGIO THAT HIS REAL FATHER WAS KILLED, BUT I'M NOT SURE HE UNDERSTANDS.
5

Social choreography. "Ecce Homo," *Love & Rockets* 10 (March 1985).
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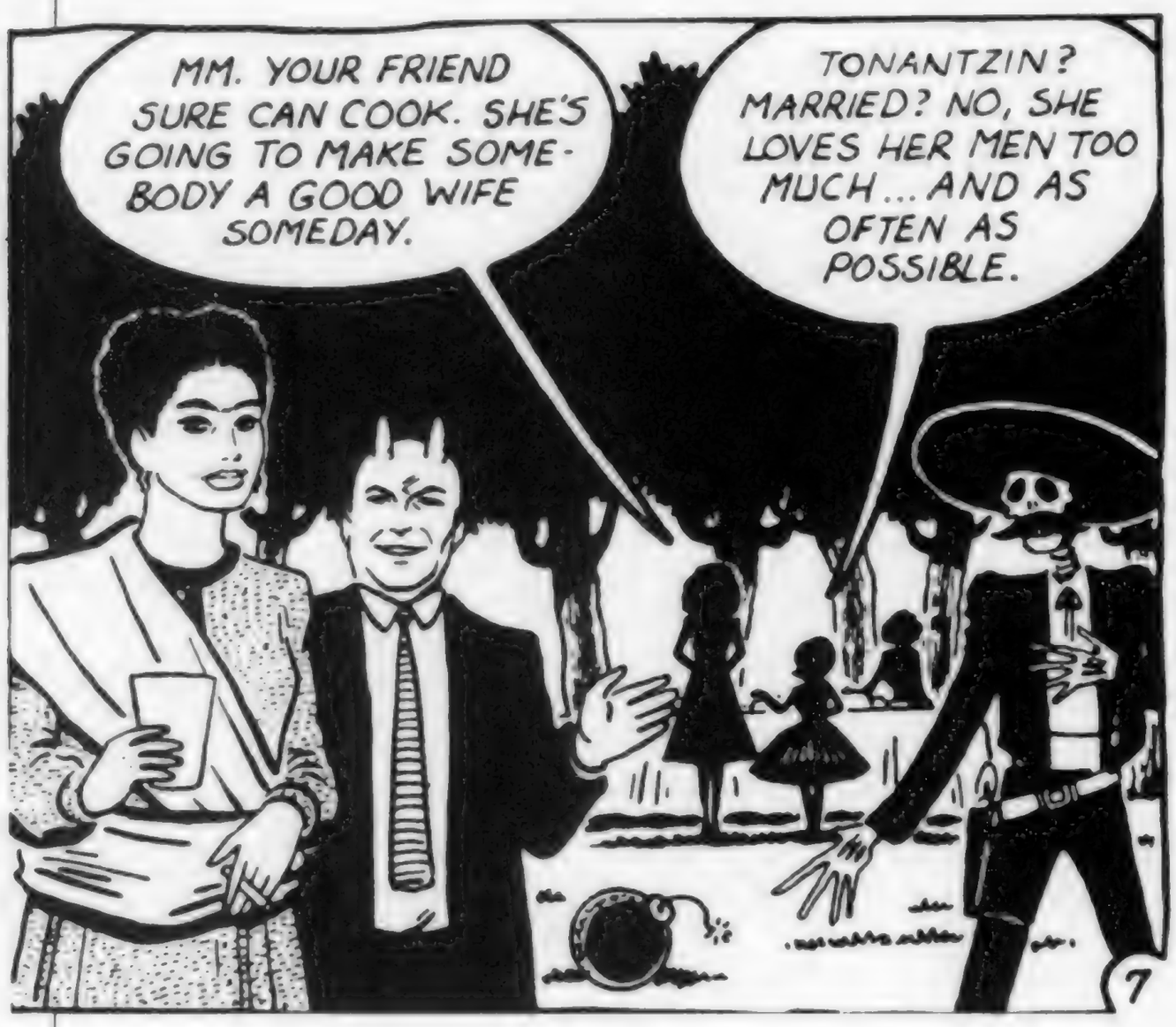

MM. YOUR FRIEND SURE CAN COOK. SHE'S GOING TO MAKE SOMEBODY A GOOD WIFE SOMEDAY.
TONANTZIN? MARRIED? NO, SHE LOVES HER MEN TOO MUCH... AND AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE.
7

Visitors to Palomar remind us of our own status as tourists and outsiders. "Ecce Homo," *Love & Rockets* 10 (March 1985). Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

drop to the ground, with this enigmatic warning: "We must try to maintain what's left of our dignity amidst the holocaust to come, Diana. Even if we wind up on our knees!" Thus Palomar's relationship to the outside world is thrown into question, and Tonantzin's paranoia decisively established.

After dismissing Diana to do her chores, Tonantzin passes by a building (page 18, panel one) in front of which stands Sheriff Chelo, who is debating with the mayor (seen through the window) the advantages and disadvantages of connecting Palomar to the outer world via telephone. Symbolically boxed inside the window frame, the mayor represents willful isolation: "The outside world is a stinking dying elephant and to become directly linked with it would mean our end as well . . ." (panel three). As Chelo closes the conversation (panel four), deep focus reveals the tiny figures of Humberto and Heraclio in the distance—the former sitting and sketching the sheriff, the latter peeking over his shoulder.

In the following panel, seen from behind Humberto, the artist realizes he is being watched, and balks. Yet despite Humberto's protests, Heraclio praises his drawing, reassuring him that what he's doing is "real art." (Note the fluid shot/reverse shot exchanges, and critical use of foreground framing, in

Deep focus evokes the variety of life in Palomar. *Love & Rockets* 20 (April 1987). Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

panels five through seven.) Then (panel eight) Heraclio begins to educate Humberto about great artists—a step which will of course have profound consequences for Palomar—as the two walk down the street. In the final panel on this page (panel nine), Augustin, Humberto's occasional companion and foil, interrupts Heraclio's pep talk by ridiculing Humberto's "pretty drawing." Humberto, not up to hearing his work criticized, bolts, provoking Augustin's scorn and Heraclio's dismay (top, page 19). Thus Heraclio's protector/patron relationship vis-à-vis Humberto is clearly established, as is Humberto's sensitivity, talent and ambition.

As Heraclio leaves Augustin behind (page 19, panel two), he comes upon Luba's daughter Guadalupe, who is being taunted by Boots and Concha, two girls who seem to be insinuating that Guadalupe's mother is a whore (thus the girl's tortured reply, "She is not, you stupid heads!!"). To spare Guadalupe further teasing, Heraclio steps in, and scares the two offending girls away by claiming to be her father (ironically, he is indeed her father, but does not know it). Then he rescues Guadalupe and carries her home, bringing an end to the sequence. Here we see the young girl's desperate need to defend her mother from criticism, and a hidden but undeniable father/daughter bond which eventually comes out into the open.

The whole sequence is remarkably smooth, knit together by shot/reverse shot exchanges, shifts from foreground to background figures, varied distances (long, medium and close-up shots), and even spoken cues from off-panel characters. In the course of this relatively uneventful scene Hernandez sets up crucial issues which underlie the novel: Palomar's isolation and vulnerability, highlighted by Tonantzin's fears; Humberto's artistic drive, encouraged by Heraclio's intellectual vanity; Luba's reputation, implied by Guadalupe's protectiveness; and, finally, the question of Guadalupe's paternity. The sequence is at once complicated and seemingly effortless.

In contrast, key sequences later in the novel shift from subject to subject with daring abruptness, reflecting the town's growing panic and the story's surging momentum. In particular, an extraordinary sequence two-thirds into the novel (pages 76 through 78) captures the growing frenzy of activity in the town, and thus epitomizes Hernandez's control of rhythm and detail. Beginning with an aerial view of the town, labeled "ground zero," Hernandez moves the reader rapidly through a three-page, twenty-four panel sequence in which several plotlines come to fruition. As Khamo carries the wounded Chancla back to town, the population steps up its war with the invading monkeys, clubbing and killing, bagging and burning them en masse. At the same time, Luba's cousin Ofelia searches the crowd for Luba's daughter Doralis, lost among the monkeys (note the deployment of deep focus), and Maricela and Riri agree to leave town that evening. Meanwhile, Heraclio's wife Carmen and her friends try to break Tonantzin's hunger strike by forcing her to watch them eat, and Sheriff Chelo's deputies begin to round up suspects in the killings—summoning first Khamo, then Tomaso, then Humberto.

A vis-à-vis shot gives equal emphasis to both parties. *Love & Rockets* 22 (August 1987). Reproduced by permission of Fantagraphics Books.

While all of this is going on, the detective Borro achieves his long-held desire of having sex with Luba, and the panels of their energetic, almost feral coupling punctuate the scene. As the sound of the monkey's never-ending chittering, "chit chit," violates the borders between these panels, linking them formally and symbolically, Borro and Luba are equated quite clearly with the monkeys, especially Borro (compare page 76's close-up of his agitated face, eyes limned with raw, bestial passion). Indeed, the violence surrounding the monkeys serves to connect all of the different plotlines, bringing graphic and thematic continuity to the rapid-fire breakdowns. For example, on the second page, panel five, a happy-go-lucky monkey-killer cavorts in the background, waving a bleeding, headless monkey corpse in an image as giddy and comical as it is insane. The image stands smack dab in the middle of the page, of course. Also, throughout the sequence, the monkey's frantic chittering mingles with the noises of Palomar: the shouting of Chancla's sisters, Ofelia's calling for Doralis, Doralis' own monkey-like "chit"-ing, and finally, the overwhelming chomping and gobbling of Carmen's friends as they try to break Tonantzin's fast. (Luba and Borro's sexual ferocity, though depicted wordlessly, likewise suggests noise and energy.)

The sequence closes with the monkeys as well. As the townspeople hurl bags of dead monkeys into a mass burning pit (bottom, page 78), the smoke of

the cremation rises, leading to a final panel which breaks the frenetic rhythm of the scene: the image of a statue, still and inscrutable, smiling as smoke fills the sky. Here, at last, we can catch our breath, as the next scene restores a calmer, more even rhythm.

Such sequences are not simply grand-standing displays of technique. Rather, they arise from Hernandez's abiding interest in the complexity and simultaneity of communal life, whether in peace (as in the final page of "Duck Feet") or in crisis (as here). Conversely, his technique has evidently influenced his thematic interests. Over time the stories in the *Heartbreak Soup* cycle seem to have responded to new opportunities opened up by his increasing fluency in the comics form. As the above-discussed techniques enabled characters to interact on a vast scale without sacrificing the vivid singularity of each, they prompted ever larger and more complex narrative structures, culminating in the demanding multigenerational epic *Poison River* (*Love & Rockets* 29-40, 1989-93) and subsequent stories, where non-chronological and non-linear passages are common. These later stories, not coincidentally, have exceeded the limits of Palomar, giving Hernandez a much wider geographical stage on which to play out his increasingly baroque narrative gambits. The influence of content and form has been reciprocal.

Describing an arsenal of storytelling techniques like Gilbert Hernandez's is rigorous work, but can help our understanding insofar as the descriptions allow us to see content and form in a generative, mutually informing relationship. Working out descriptions of form is but the first step in understanding comics; it remains to study the ways in which content is embedded in form, and vice versa. The reciprocal influence of content and form will of course demand different things of different cartoonists and different stories, so what is true of Gilbert Hernandez may not be true of cartoonists generally. As an heuristic prompt, however, the idea of a fundamental link between what the cartoonist wants to represent (content) and how he chooses to represent it (form) sheds much light, not only on the craft of comics, but on its very logic. In this connection *Love & Rockets* offers a staggering wealth of example, as well as an uncommon cultural and political relevance which encourages, even demands, further study. ●

NOTES

1. Mario's involvement with the series has been minimal since issue #3 (1983), but it was his initial prodding, and access to a print shop, which made *Love & Rockets* a reality. See Robert Fiore, Gary Groth, and Thom Powers, "Pleased to Meet Them . . .The Hernandez Bros. Interview," *The Comics Journal* 126 (January 1989), 72-74.

2. On the influence of punk music and punk culture, see Fiore et al., "Pleased to Meet Them," 66-72.

3. This juvenilia has been publicly excerpted in Los Bros Hernandez, *Love & Rockets Sketchbook*, Volume One (Westlake Village, CA: Fantagraphics Books, 1989).

4. For evidence of the loyalty inspired by Los Bros' fresh outlook, see the letters from readers in early issues of *Love & Rockets* (1983-1986). For example, in issue #12 (July 1985) a self-styled "hard-core" punk applauds the book for portraying punks "as human beings with gen-yoo-wine personalities rather than the switchblade-wielding Nazi vermin we were in the mainstream publications." Similarly, a correspondent in #14 (November 1985) praises Jaime's depiction of the hard-core scene, which, he says, contributes to the book's "almost realistic" view of young people, in contrast to the aseptic, "Hardy boys-type" of characterization found in most comic books. In #13 (September 1985), one reader lauds the multicultural cast of *Love & Rockets*, calling the book "the first real 'All-American' comic, in which the viewers find themselves totally immersed in the lives of different racial groups"; while in #18 (September 1986) a woman from El Salvador writes, "I am extremely proud of the way you're representing our idiosyncrasy to the rest of the world . . . . You are vindicating our culture and introducing it better than any 'fine' artist . . . ." In #13 a female reader praises Los Bros' positive treatment of women, saying, "I absolutely love the strength of the females you've created . . . . It's about time some comic-book women were strong and human at the same time"; in #14, likewise, a woman writes, "At last, women who aren't portrayed as meek mouses who hold their men in God-like regard . . .or radical men-haters." Letters from people writing to a comic book "for the first time," and from readers who had all but sworn off comics until *Love & Rockets*, pepper the early issues, as do accolades for Los Bros' portrayals of "real life" and "real people." In the commemorative booklet *Ten Years of Love & Rockets* (September 1992), Jaime gently pokes fun at the readers' strong responses to the book, with a strip in which his principal characters, Maggie and Hopey, mouth dialogue taken from fan letters (e.g., " I think I have a crush on Maggie" and "I never thought I'd ever fall in love with a comic book character"). Such responses clearly point to a large and faithful following.

5. Neil Gaiman, interview with Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, *The Comics Journal* 178 (July 1993), 96.

6. Harvey's *The Art of the Funnies* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994) and *The Art of the Comic Book* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996) represent the leading edge of formalist criticism within academic publishing, although neither book aspires to be strictly academic in tone. Harvey's definitions of *breakdown*, *layout*, *composition* and *verbal-visual blending* underlie both studies, and are enormously helpful for formal analysis. McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (Northampton, MA: Tundra Publishing, 1993), a 200-page critical treatise in comics form, has become easily the most influential study by a contemporary comics practitioner, offering ambitious discussions of word-and-image combinations, stylistic variation, and, perhaps most importantly, panel-to-panel movement (i.e., *closure*). Behind *Understanding Comics* lies cartoonist Eisner's ground-breaking textbook, *Comics and Sequential Art* (Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press, 1985), the first booklength aesthetic study by an American practitioner. Eisner's recently-released *Graphic Storytelling* (Tamarac: Poorhouse, 1996) carries on his critical project, offering cogent analyses of narrative technique.

7. The style/technique distinction here employed has been extrapolated from Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 151 and 157.

8. Los Bros' distinctive styles, at once naturalistic and broadly comic, have been synthesized from a wide range of graphic influences—notably, the fabulism of Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby, the coy sex appeal of Dan DeCarlo and Harry Lucey on *Archie*, the gentle humor of Charles Schulz and Hank Ketcham, and the ironic, angst-filled cartooning of R. Crumb. Jaime has achieved a startling degree of realism in his drawings, and is known as a master of stark, chiaroscuro technique. Gilbert has developed a wilder, more expressionistic approach, strongly influenced by the comic distortions of such artists as Ditko, Crumb, and Harvey Kurtzman. See Fiore et al., "Pleased to Meet Them," 98-105.

9. For an overview of Japanese manga styles, see Frederick L. Shodt, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo/New York: Kodansha International, 1983) and *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996). See also McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 44 and 210.

10. Harvey, *Art of the Funnies*, 17; *Art of the Comic Book*, 9-10.

11. For discussions of the differences between comics and film, and illuminating critiques of the popular film/comics analogy, see both Harvey, *Art of the Comic Book*, 173-191 *passim*, and Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*, 72-73. If comics creators can be classified according to the various other media they invoke in their work, perhaps we can broadly distinguish between "cinematic" storytellers (*e.g.*, Los Bros) and those who persistently call attention to the comic as a *paper* artifact, à la books or newspapers (*e.g.*, Art Spiegelman). Yet even among "cinematic" cartoonists the comparison to film has its limits; the analogy takes us only as far as the border of what is unique and interesting about the comics form.

12. William Anthony Nericcio, "Artif[r]acture: Virulent Pictures, Graphic Narrative and the Ideology of the Visual," *Mosaic* 28/4 (December 1995), points out that Hernandez "captures and deftly comments upon the dynamics of cinema" (95). Nericcio shows that these cinematic touches inform a larger critique of U.S. cultural imperialism. Hernandez's movie references reveal an overarching interest in the impact of "image technologies" on the culture of Palomar and of Latin America in general (94-95). Thus movies become part not only of the technique, but also of the content of Hernandez's stories. Note, for instance, that Palomar's movie theater (run by the character Luba) displays posters for various bygone American and European films, posters which playfully suggest both the range of Hernandez's cinematic inspirations and the cultural relationship between Palomar and the "outside world." For more on *Heartbreak Soup*'s debt to film, see Fiore et al., "Pleased to Meet Them," 87-88, and Gary Groth, preface to Los Bros Hernandez, *Chelo's Burden*, Volume Two of *The Complete Love & Rockets*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1989).

13. For definitions of the film terms used in the following discussion, see, e.g., Joseph M. Boggs, *The Art of Watching Films*, 4th ed. (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1996); David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997); and Ira Konisberg, *The Complete Film Dictionary* (New York: NAL-Dutton, 1989).

14. Harvey Pekar, writer of the comic book series *American Splendor*, has observed that silent panels are one of the strengths of comics storytelling in that they can act as "punctuation," and thus influence the timing and impact of a story. See, e.g., Gary Groth, interview with Pekar, *The Comics Journal* 94 (April 1985), 47 and 64.

15. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 60-93 *passim*.

16. Harvey, *Art of the Funnies*, 8 and 15; *Art of the Comic Book*, 9-10.

17. Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*, 70.

18. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 104.

19. Joseph Witek, "Uncued Closure in *Love & Rockets*." Paper presented for the "Comic Art and Comics" section of the Popular Culture Association in Las Vegas on 28 March 1996. See Witek's forthcoming study, *The Comics Page*, for more extensive discussion of the concept of "uncued closure" and of Los Bros' formal influence on comics post-1982.

20. Named for a pre-Columbian Aztec earth goddess, the beautiful Tonantzin ("Revered Mother") bears the onus of a scandalous past—including, ironically, a series of abortions resulting from her prodigal sexuality. As vendor of the local dietary staple, fried *babosas* (slugs), Tonantzin provides for her people much like her mythic namesake, yet, as established in "Ecce Homo" and such later stories as "An American in Palomar" (*Love & Rockets* 13-14, 1985) and "Duck Feet," her character has a tragic dimension. Ill-educated and lacking both confidence and purpose, she is credulous, rash, and easily manipulated.

21. *Human Diastrophism* has since been collected and revised in Gilbert Hernandez, *Blood of Palomar*, Volume Eight of *The Complete Love & Rockets* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1989). Citations throughout the rest of this paper refer to *Blood of Palomar*, since it offers the story in its most complete and accessible form.

22. The following six paragraphs have been distilled from "Art and Social Responsibility in Gilbert Hernandez's *Human Diastrophism*," a paper presented for the "Comic Art and Comics" section of the Popular Culture Association in Las Vegas on 28 March 1996.

23. Over the course of the series, Luba has emerged as *Heartbreak Soup*'s most complexly developed female character, and thus the central character in Hernandez's oeuvre. *Human Diastrophism* captures a crucial moment in her development from disreputable *bañadora* (bath-giver) to mayor; later stories, such as *Poison River* (1989-93) and "Luba Conquers the World" (*Love & Rockets* 48, 1995) both fill in her harrowing life story and establish her authority as matriarch of Palomar.

24. Nericcio, "Artif[r]acture," 99-100, sees the novel as partly "a Bildungsroman of a struggling neophyte artist—Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* re-imagined pen in hand south of the border." Nericcio suggests, and I have argued elsewhere, that Humberto's existential crisis stems not only from the violence of his surroundings, but also the anxiety of influence brought on by his sudden immersion in the works of his artistic forebears (Picasso, Klee, Cassatt, et al.). Swipes from many such artists occur throughout the novel.

25. Hernandez, *Blood of Palomar*, 55.

26. Hernandez, *Blood of Palomar*, 79.

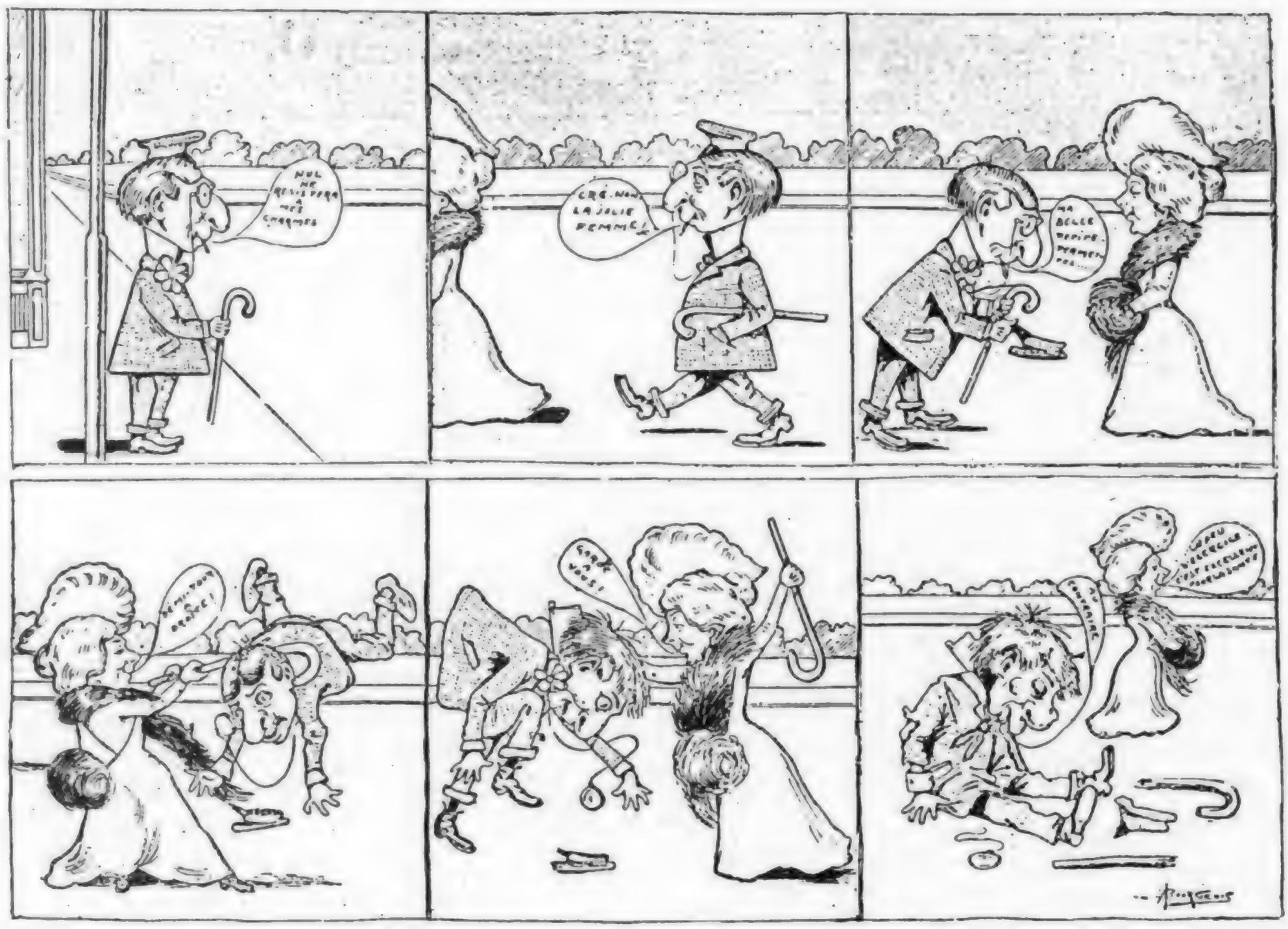
27. Hernandez, *Blood of Palomar*, 83.

An Introduction to the Canadian Newspaper Comic

BY KENNETH S. BARKER

SAMEDI, 30 JANVIER 1904 LA PATRIE 13

LES AVENTURES DE TIMOTHEE



Les Aventures de Timothee by Alberic Bourgeois, 30 January 1904

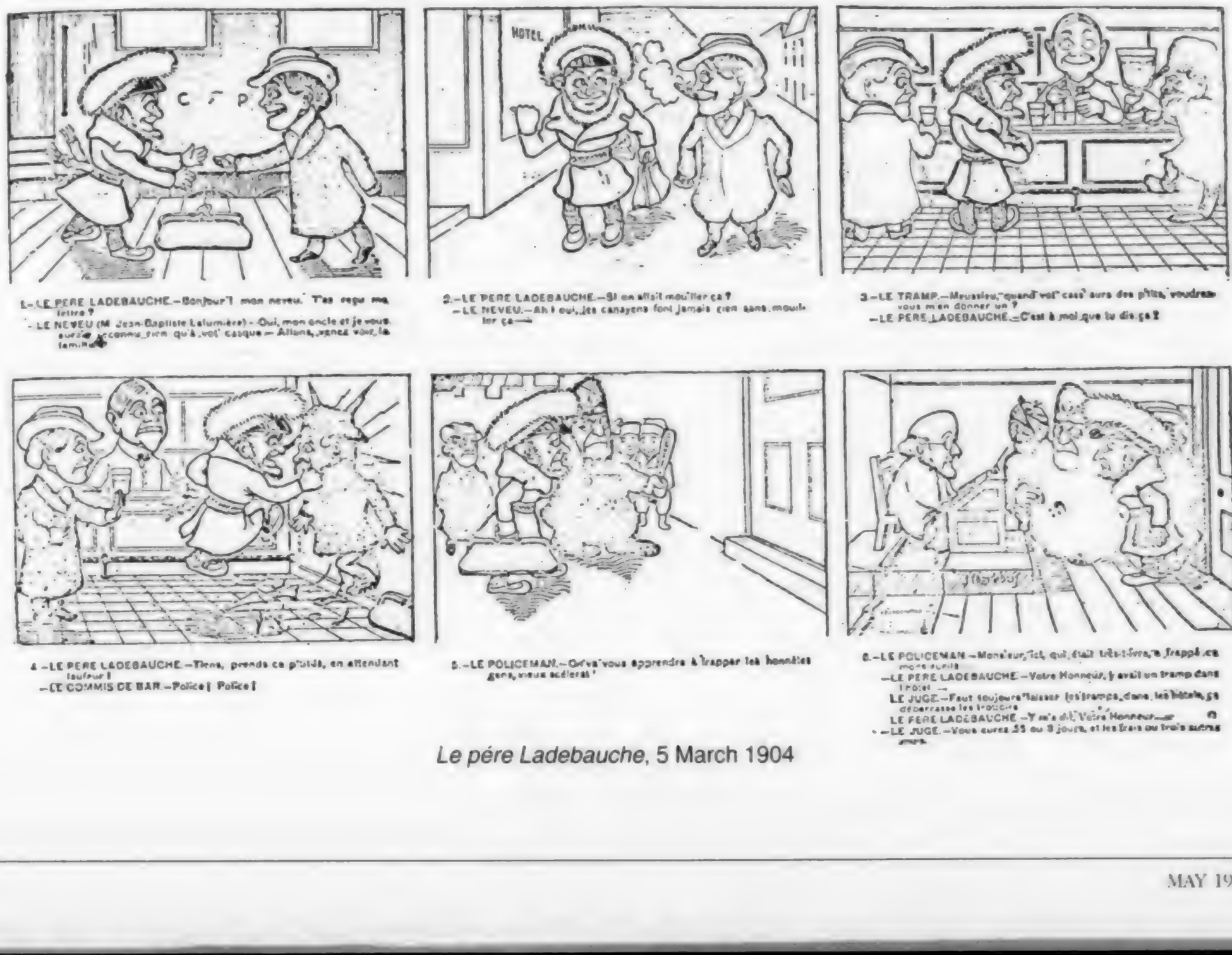
The initial draft of this paper was presented to the Popular Culture Association convention, Baltimore, Maryland, on 28 April 1977. An expanded version was presented to the Mackenzie Heritage Printer Museum, Queenston, Ontario, on 5 October 1996, and further revisions are included in this article. The absence of tear sheets or clippings of early Canadian comic strips necessitated the use of photocopies from microfilm to illustrate this article.

A proper study of Canadian newspaper comics must begin with the realization that in Canadian culture one encounters material in both French and English. And because the easy availability of anglophone culture from the United States has always hindered the development of an indigenous anglophone Canadian culture, it is not surprising to find the first Canadian comics in the francophone Montreal papers *La Patrie* and *La Presse*. Here on 30 January 1904 the first Canadian comic page modeled on the American pattern was published: *La Patrie* printed a half-page *Les Aventures de Timothee* by Alberic Bourgeois. Three weeks later its rival, *La Presse*, followed with a half-page *Il N'y Eut Pas De Canard au Diner*, and then on 4 March it introduced a continuing series, *Le Pere Ladebauche*. The latter comic usually appeared every second Saturday, although the schedule was not consistent. Nor was the comic wholly original. The character of Ladebauche had been created in 1879 by Hector Berthelot and had appeared as early as 1901 in a series of cartoons by Raoul Barré entitled *En Roulant Ma Boule*.[1]

In 1905 Alberic Bourgeois was lured to *La Presse*. In addition to taking over the *Ladebauche* series and other artistic responsibilities on the paper, Bourgeois created three other series: *Zidore*, *Toinon* and *Pitou et Son Grand-Papa*. *Toinon* began as a Canadian version of Richard Felton Outcault's *Buster Brown*. Each episode included a resolution to be better by the mischievous boy. When Toinon's cousin Polyte was added to the action, the comic turned into a Katzenjammer-style conspiracy. Bourgeois was a man of great artistic talent. His comic work appeared in Montreal papers for well over fifty years and his more serious work was

Le père Ladebauche arrive a Montréal

(SERIE D'AVENTURES AMUSANTES)



1.–LE PERE LADEBAUCHE.–Bonjour'l mon neveu. T'as reçu ma lettre ?
–LE NEVEU (M. Jean-Baptiste Lalumière) – Oui, mon oncle et je vous aurais reconnu rien qu'à vot' casque.– Allons, venez voir, la famille.

2.–LE PERE LADEBAUCHE.–Si on allait mouiller ça ?
–LE NEVEU.–Ah ! oui, les canayens font jamais rien sans mouiller ça.–

3.–LE TRAMP.–Mesusieu, quand vot' casq' aura des plis, voudrez vous m'en donner un ?
–LE PERE LADEBAUCHE.–C'est à moi que tu dis ça ?

4.–LE PERE LADEBAUCHE.–Tiens, prends ce p'tit, en attendant l'autre !
–LE COMMIS DE BAR.–Police ! Police !

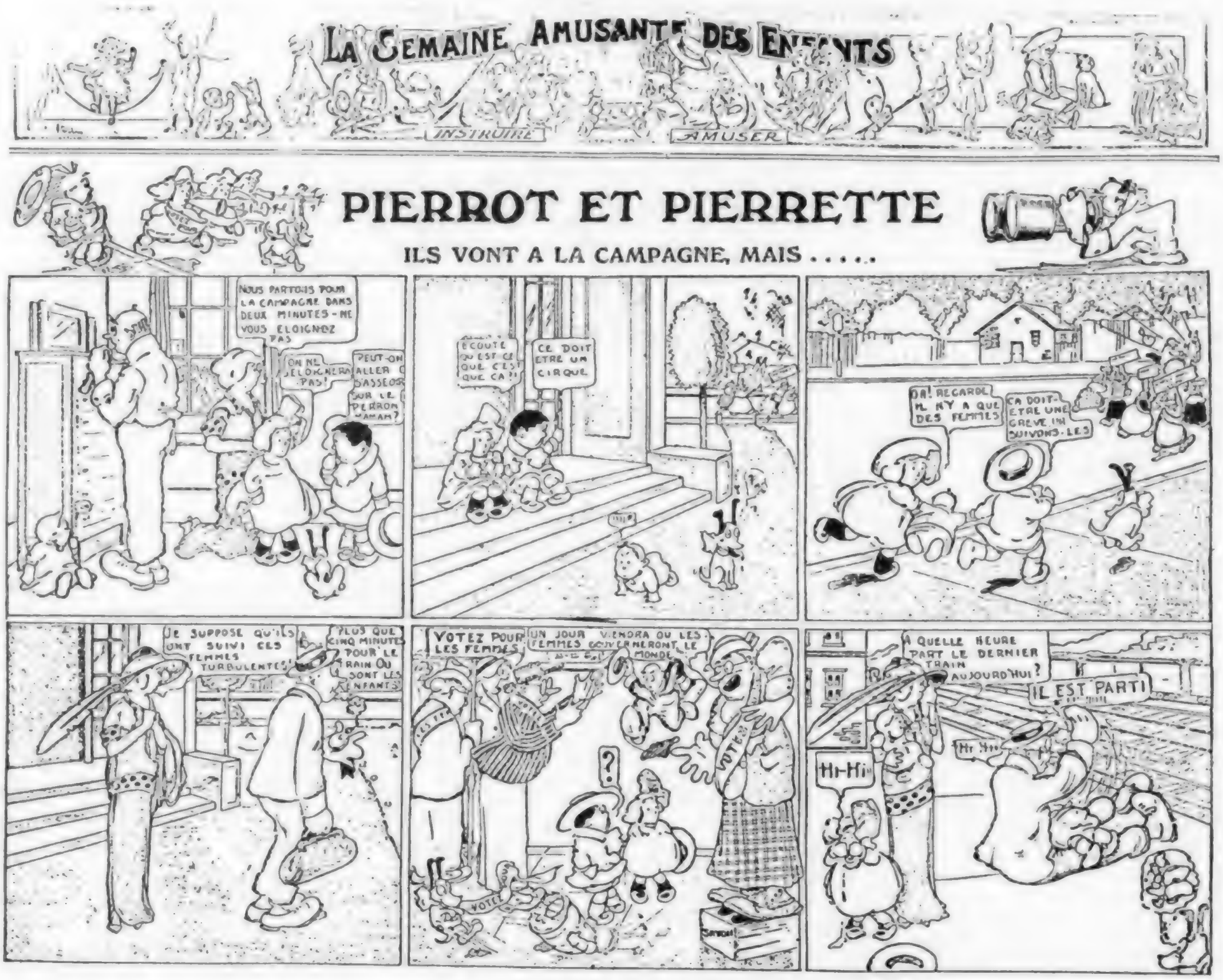
5.–LE POLICEMAN.–Ce n'a vous apprendre à frapper les honnêtes gens, vieux scélérat !

6.–LE POLICEMAN.–Monsieur, ici, qui était très ivre, a frappé ce monsieur.
–LE PERE LADEBAUCHE.–Votre Honneur, y avait un tramp dans l'hotel.–
LE JUGE.–Faut toujours laisser les tramps dans les hôtels, ça débarrasse les trottoirs.
LE PERE LADEBAUCHE.–Y m'a dit, Votre Honneur.–
–LE JUGE.–Vous aurez 55 ou 3 jours, et les frais ou trois autres jours.

Le pére Ladebauche, 5 March 1904

Zidore by Alberic Bourgeois,

Pierrot et Pierrette by Russell Patterson, c. 1913


LA SEMAINE AMUSANTE DES ENFANTS
INSTRUIRE
AMUSER
PIERROT ET PIERRETTE
ILS VONT A LA CAMPAGNE, MAIS . . . . .
NOUS PARTONS POUR LA CAMPAGNE DANS DEUX MINUTES - NE VOUS ELOIGNEZ PAS
ON NE S'ELOIGNERA PAS!
PEUT-ON ALLER S'ASSEOIR SUR LE PERRON MAMAN?
ECOUTE QU'EST-CE QUE C'EST QUE CA?!
CE DOIT ETRE UN CIRQUE
OH! REGARDE! IL N'Y A QUE DES FEMMES
CA DOIT ETRE UNE GREVE ON SUIVONS-LES
JE SUPPOSE QU'ILS ONT SUIVI CES FEMMES TURBULENTES
PLUS QUE CINQ MINUTES POUR LE TRAIN OU SONT LES ENFANTS
VOTEZ POUR LES FEMMES
UN JOUR VIENDRA OU LES FEMMES GOUVERNERONT LE MONDE
VOTE
QUELLE HEURE PART LE DERNIER TRAIN AUJOURD'HUI?
IL EST PARTI
Hi-Hi

given public exhibition. Born in Montreal on 29 November 1876, he studied at l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts before going to Boston where, in 1902, he was hired by the *Post*. He was persuaded to return to Montreal by the Honorable Israel Tarte, owner of the conservative *La Patrie*. Bourgeois's career ended with his death on 17 November 1962.

Raoul Barré, another very talented artist, was eventually attracted to do a series for *La Patrie*. His short-lived *Les Contes Du Pere Rhault* began on 26 June 1906. Barré was born in Montreal on 29 January 1874, and, like Bourgeois, had attended l'Ecole des Beaux Arts. In 1895 he went to Paris to study at the Academie Julian. In later years he moved to New York City and in partnership with Charles Bowers opened one of the earliest animated cartoon studios. He was responsible for many of the early Mutt and Jeff cartoons and is credited with the invention of celluloids. He died on 22 May 1932.[4]

On 17 October 1908 *La Patrie* began printing American comics, *Buster Brown* and *The Newlyweds* in French translation and ended for the time being indigenous Canadian work. Barré's last page appeared on 31 October 1908, except for one later page printed 17 April 1909.

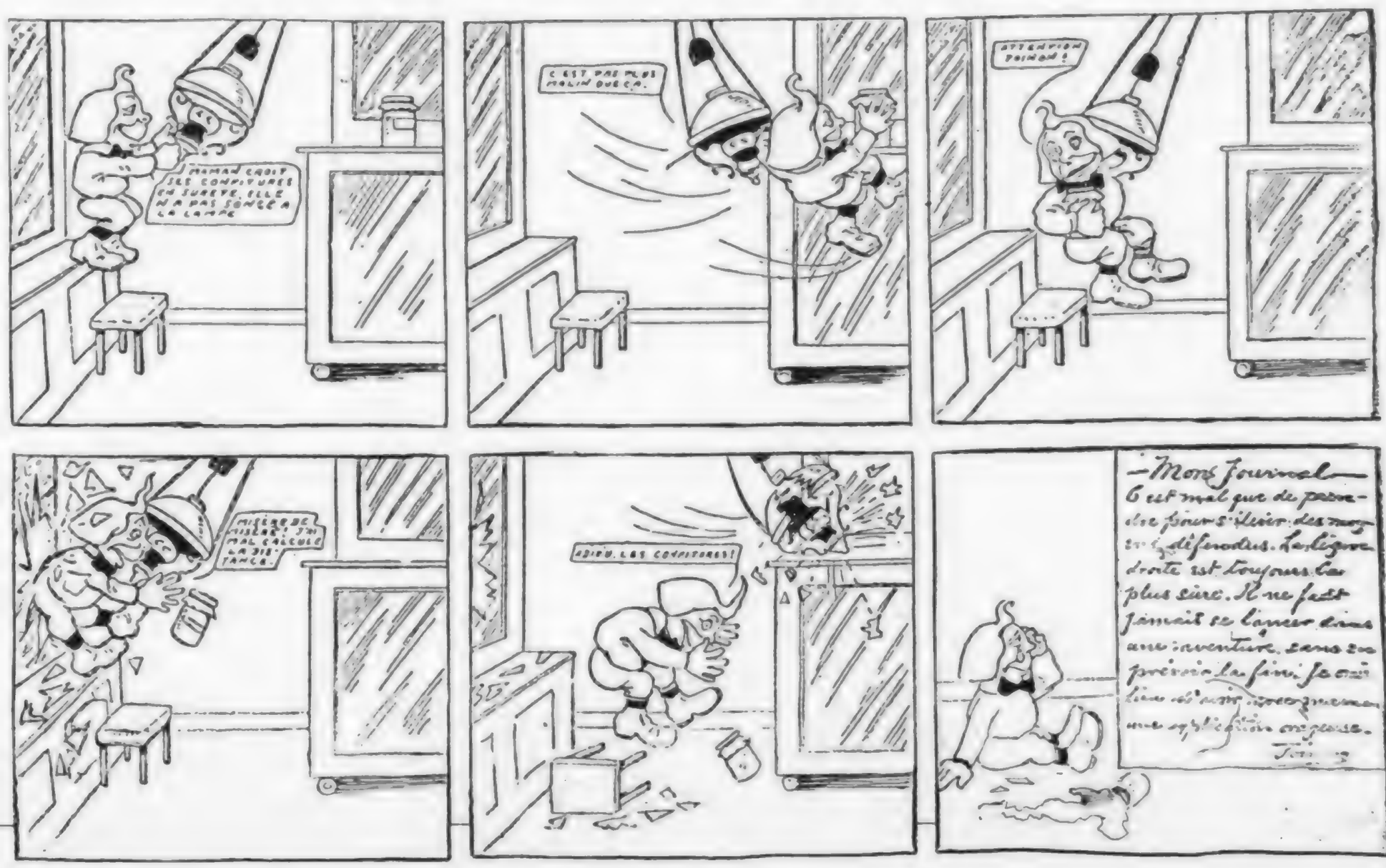
Another notable pioneer in the francophone press was Russell Patterson, a native of Omaha, Nebraska. Patterson came to Canada when his father, a railroad lawyer, began work for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Young Patterson spent a year at McGill University studying architecture before turning to newspaper work. In 1912 he did sports cartoons for the *Montreal Standard* but soon found an opportunity to do a comic page for the French language *La Patrie*. *Pierrot et Pierrette* was begun in the summer of 1913 and it probably would have continued longer had it not been for the outbreak of World War I. The comic ended on 8 August 1914. Patterson eventually returned to the United States where, among many other artistic achievements, he did a comic series *Mamie* for United Feature Syndicate from 1951 to 1956.[5]

The introduction of American newspaper comics in French translation as early as November 1905 provided tough competition for French Canadian artists. Following World War I *La Patrie* revived *Les Aventures de Timothee*, this time drawn by Arthur LeMay, and *La Presse* ran J. A. Boisvert's daily *Benoni*, but by the mid-1920s the less expensive, and perhaps more popular, American comics had taken over.

The process by which francophone newspapers were eventually inundated by American comics

Toinon by Alberic Bourgeois, c. 1905

Confitures et Déconfitures


MAMAN CROIT LES CONFITURES EN SURETE, ELLE N'A PAS SONGE A LA CAVE
C'EST PAS PLUS MALIN QUE CA.
ATTENTION TOINON !
MISERE DE MISERE ! J'AI MAL CALCULE LA DISTANCE
ADIEU, LES CONFITURES !
—Mon Journal— C'est mal que de penser pour s'élever des moyens déloyaux. La ligne droite est toujours la plus sûre. Il ne faut jamais se lancer dans une aventure, sans en prévoir la fin. Je suis bien ébahi d'avoir commencé une explication anglaise.
Toinon

JUNIPER Junction
by Jim FRISE
ANYTHIN' DOIN' DOWN AT TH' LAKE-FRONT ARCHIE ?
I'LL SAY THERE IS— PLENTY ! YOU OUGHTA SEE TH' MIXED BATHIN' PARTY SPLASHIN' ROUND IN TH' MOONLIGHT — NOT ONE OF 'EM WEARIN' A BATHIN' SUIT !
LOOKS LIKE I STARTED SOMETHIN' !
THEY'LL FIND THEY CAN'T GIT AWAY WITH THAT SORTA THING ROUN' THESE PARTS !
BETCHA IT'S THAT GANG STAYIN' UP AT "RESTY-NOOK" !
S-SH !
!!!

Juniper Junction by Jimmy Frise, 3 August 1947

explains the difficulty anglophone Canadian newspapers encountered trying to develop a native Canadian comic. English-language Canadian newspapers began to print American comics early in the century. The *Toronto Star*, for example, had a comic section as early as 1906; and the *Evening News* as early as 1907. The two major Canadian weekend papers, the *Toronto Star Weekly* (begun in 1910) and the *Montreal Standard* (begun in 1912) gradually built up their comic sections until, from the 1920s through the 1940s, most major American comics were carried.

The first successful English-language Canadian comic page was Jimmy Frise's *Birdseye Center* which began in the *Toronto Star Weekly*, though not in its colored comic section, on 12 December 1925. It ran to 1 February 1947. What endeared the comic to its readers was the gentle portrayal of small town Canadian life through the exploits of Old Archie and his tame moose; Eli and Ruby Doolittle; Pig-skin Peters; the Chief; and Wes Clipper, the barber. *Birdseye Center* had some of the homey character of Lynn Johnston's later *For Better or For Worse*.

James Llewellyn Frise was born in 1891 near Fingerboard, Ontario, on Lake Scugog, northeast of Toronto, the only child of John and Hannah Frise. He came to Toronto in 1910 and by April 1913 was doing cartoons for small town newspapers such as the *Owen Sound Sun*. After service overseas in World War I, Frise returned to work in Toronto with the desire to pursue a career in cartooning. On 25 January 1919 his cartoon *At the Rink* was printed in the *Toronto Star*. By 15 March the series had been named *Life's Little Comedies*.[4] After World War II Frise received an offer from the *Montreal Standard*, the *Star*'s chief rival. If he signed with the Montreal paper his work would appear in the colored comic section. To realize his long-time ambition, Frise made the move to Montreal. He found, however, he could not take the title of his comic series with him. On 22 February 1947 *Birdseye Center* became *Juniper Junction*. Frise was at the peak of his achievement when he died suddenly of a heart attack on 13 June 1948 at age fifty-seven.

The man chosen to continue *Juniper Junction* was Douglas Wright, son of an Oxford University graduate killed in World War I a month before Armistice. The younger Wright came to Montreal in 1938 on the promise of a $90-a-month job in the art department of the Sun-Life Assurance Company of Canada. During Second World War service at Rivers, Manitoba, Wright was first inspired to try professional cartooning. After the war he sold some material to the *Standard*, but his break came with the unexpected death of Frise when he was chosen to continue the popular series. He did so until the *Family Herald*, which shared jointly in the publication of the comic, folded in September 1968.

In the meantime Wright had begun a popular comic of his own that featured a bald headed youngster and two suburban parents who never spoke. The comic was named *Nipper*, much to the annoyance of Wright and possibly in unknown copyright violation of Clare Victor Dwiggins old comic of the same title. When Wright changed publishers, *Nipper* became *Doug Wright's Family*. A second son was added to the family and the two gradually aged over the years. In the late 1960s Wright moved to suburban Burlington, Ontario, where the antics of the neighborhood kids supplied ongoing inspiration.[5]

Several additional humor comics should be noted: The *Toronto Star Weekly* ran Walter Ball's *Rural Route* from November 1956 to the demise of the weekly *Star* in 1968.[6] James Nathaniel Simpkins's

Sargeant Renfrew by Dave Broadfoot and Urbansky, 16 October 1979

SERGEANT RENFREW
THE CASE OF THE POLITICAL REFUGEE
10/16
WHEN WE ARRIVED IN MOOSE FACTORY, THE FACTORY WAS CLOSED. BUT THE MAYOR WAS THERE TO MEET US.
I'D LIKE TO MAKE A SPECIAL PRESENTATION.
I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THE KEY TO THE CITY!

Men of the Mounted
BASED ON TRUE TALES OF THE R.C.M.P.
By Ted McCall.
FOLLOW THE THRILLS DANGERS AND ROMANCE OF THE
ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
...OVER BARREN PLAINS..
ARCTIC SNOWS..
MOUNTAIN STREAMS AND PASSES
..AND IN THE AIR.....
START TODAY THE ARCTIC PROWLER

Start here and follow the thrilling and true adventures of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Begin to-day and enjoy the daily romantic story of the men who carried the law into the bleak Arctic and the plains of the North-West.

This picture story, the newest feature of The Telegram, is based on authentic records of Mounties prepared by E. R. McCall after several years of study and writing of the history of the men who "always get their man."

This daily feature will tell dramatic tales of lonely vigils in the far-flung outposts, of relentless manhunts over thousands of miles of wilderness of the Far North, the forest and the heat-scorched prairies. The story of the advance of Young Canada will be unfolded in word and picture, from the day when the primitive Indian roamed the West, of the cattle-rustler, the mining-camp gambler and gold thief, to the present day of the rum-runner, a smuggler and counterfeiter in the heart of Canada's most flourishing cities.

Tales that must thrill every reader will be told, tales of a glorious past, a glorious present: tales of achievement which have echoed the name of "The Mounted" throughout the world. Tales based on true facts, dealing with the adventures of real people in real scenes!

Men of the Mounted by Ted McCall and Henry S. Hall, 11 February 1933

highly popular *Jasper, the Alberta Bear*, began in *Macleans* magazine, but eventually found its way to the comic page.[7] A short lived humor strip was syndicated by Doug Sneyd from 10 September 1979 to 5 January 1980. *Sergeant Renfrew of the Mounties*, an adaptation of the popular *Air Farce* radio program, was written by Dave Broadfoot and drawn by Urbansky. Sneyd also syndicated his own satirical strip *Scoops*.[8]

In the 1930s the old *Toronto Telegram* experimented with two Canadian adventure strips, both written by E. R. "Ted" McCall. *Men of the Mounted*, drawn by Harry S. Hall, was based on the adventures of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. When it began on 13 February 1933, the heroes were Corporal Bruce and P. C. Blair but each story—there were four in all—had a different star. The strip ended in the parent *Telegram* on Saturday, 16 February 1935. The very next day, Sunday, 17 February, the Stephen Slesinger comic *King of the Royal Mounted* began with Corporal (as of 17 November 1935, Sergeant) King as the hero. Apparently McCall believed it was a steal, but to my knowledge no legal action was ever taken. Seven months later, using Charles R. Snelgrove as artist, McCall launched his second strip, *Robin Hood and Company*, based on the famous English hero. This strip expired on 16 December 1939, with the last few weeks drawn by Harry Hall.[9] Although both strips were syndicated nationally by the Telegram, appearing in several Canadian newspapers, neither enjoyed a long life. As comic strips of the 1930s went, they were neither the best nor the worst of the breed.

Another effort to develop a Canadian adventure strip began in the late 1950s. Capitalizing on Canada's success with the Aero jet fighter plane, Bill Dulmage teamed with artist Bob McCormick to produce *Danny Fortune*. Begun by the Toronto Star Syndicate on 2 June 1958, Danny might have had a longer run if his creators had been able to meet deadlines. Danny quickly passed from scene, as did, indeed, Canada's Aero fighter.[10]

On 19 May 1960, at the height of the circulation war between the *Toronto Telegram* and the *Toronto Daily Star*, the team of Johnson and Dewar began *Jeff Buchanon* for the Telegram Syndicate featuring a handsome newspaper reporter who traveled across Canada. The art work was polished, though heavily influenced by the style of John Cullen Murphy.[11]

The *Toronto Daily Star* responded with *Larry Brannon*, a twenty-eight year old troubleshooter for a mining company. His occupation enabled the hero to travel the country and Larry's first adventure took place in the interior of British Columbia. The strip was done by Hamilton-born James Winslow Mortimer who had studied at the Art Students' League in New York and worked in the U.S. for several years. To take on *Larry Brannon*, Mortimer gave up *David Crane*, a comic strip he was doing for Hall Syndicate about the adventures of a Protestant minister. The limited Canadian market, approximately one tenth of the U.S., combined with a general decline in the popularity of adventure strips in the 1960s led to the demise of both *Jeff Buchanon* and *Larry Brannon*.

At least two attempts were made to teach Canadian history by means of the newspaper comics, one in the 1920s and another in the 1930s. *This Canada of Ours* was written by Maud Morrison Stone and drawn by J. S. Morrison. The *Hamilton*

Spectator and the *Winnipeg Tribune* both began the series on 2 May 1925, but they and the *Calgary Herald* printed the strips on an irregular basis. The strip ended on 23 May, 1929 with an episode entitled "Alexander Mackenzie."[12] Another attempt at popularizing Canadian history came in late 1935 with *When Canada Was Young*, written by A. M. Wickson and drawn by W. S. Gow. It began in the *Calgary Herald* on 6 January 1936, with a strip numbered 16, but a careful examination of the *Herald* microfilm back to November 1935 failed to locate any of the previous fifteen strips. This comic ended with strip #150 and the message, "And thus, young Canadians of today, these Canadians of long ago, when Canada was young, bid you farewell."[13]

Careful readers of this article will have noticed incomplete names and dates that current resources cannot supply. This survey, though hopefully accurate, is by no means complete. Arch Dale's *Doo Dads* in the Winnipeg *Grain Growers Guide*; Alfred "Ben" Wicks *The Outcasts*; Bill Paine's *Giants*; Brian Fay's *Le Grand Chef Pierre*; and Peter Adamakos's *Winnie Witch and the Giant Potato* come to mind. There are also several Canadian-born cartoonists such as James Robert Williams, Harold Rudolph Foster, Joe Shuster, Lynn Johnston and Sandra Bell-Lundy who have done most if not all their work for U.S. syndicates. The hope is that this article will stimulate further research. ●

NOTES

1. Born in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, in 1842, Berthelot died in Montreal in 1895.

2. *Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Toronto, 1963, s. v. "Barré, Raoul." Another source dates his birth in 1872. See I. Klein, "Pioneer Animated Cartoon Producer Charles R. Bowers," in *Cartoonist PROfiles*, March 1975, 55.

3. Born on 26 December 1894, Russell Patterson died in 1977.

4. A number of Frise cartoons were published in the *Owen Sound Sun* between April 1913 and December 1914. One may assume they appeared in other Ontario newspapers as well. In the 1920s Frise also contributed cartoons to the *Rod and Gun* magazine, some of which were also reprinted in the *Owen Sound Sun-Times*. A collection of the *Birdseye Center* cartoons was published in 1965 by McClelland & Stewart.

5. Wright was born in England in 1917. He died of a stroke in Hamilton, Ontario, on 4 January 1983, at age sixty-five.

6. Ball was born in Cookstown, Ontario, in 1911. He began work for the *Toronto Star* on 1 April 1932.

7. Simpkins was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on 26 November 1910. *Jasper* ran in *Macleans* magazine for twenty-four years. *Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 1988, s. v. "Simpkins, James Nathaniel."

8. Sneyd was born in 1933. In addition to his newspaper work, he did a "girlie" series for Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* magazine.

9. See my "Men of the Mounted" in *Strip Scene* 11 (Spring 1980) 29-38. McCall died on 2 November 1975, at age 74. As an aside, during World War II when American comic books were banned in Canada as part of the War Measures Act, a Canadian comic book enterprise grew up to fill the void. McCall contributed a character called Freelance, writing the stories at his desk at the *Telegram* during the monotonous night shift.

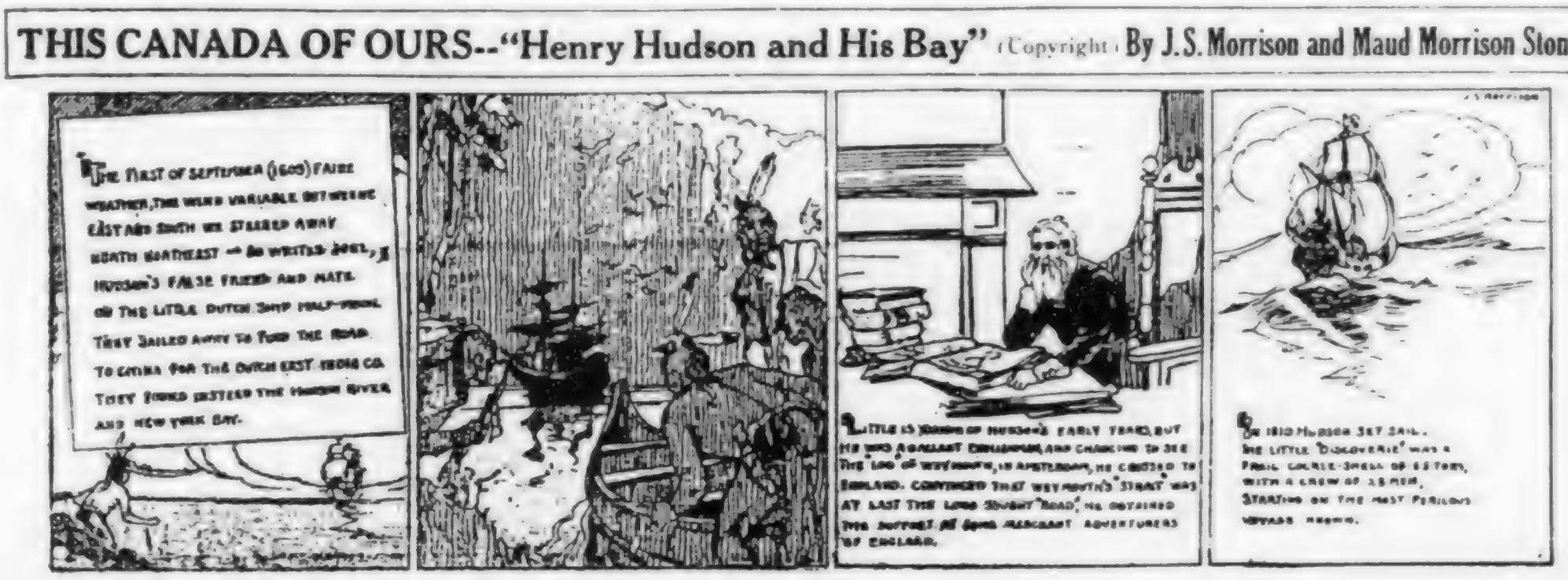
10. See my "Danny Fortune" in *Strip Scene* 13 (Fall 1980) 43-45.

11. Strangely *Jeff Buchanon* did not begin in the parent *Telegram*.

12. See my "This Canada of Ours" in *Strip Scene* 19 (Spring 1982) 39.

13. See my "When Canada Was Young" in *Strip Scene* 16 (Summer 1981) 49-51.

This Canada of Ours by J. S. Morrison and Maud Morrison Stone, 31 July 1925


THIS CANADA OF OURS--"Henry Hudson and His Bay" (Copyright) By J.S. Morrison and Maud Morrison Stone
THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER (1609) FAIRE WEATHER, THE WIND VARIABLE BETWEENE EAST AND SOUTH WE STEERED AWAY NORTH NORTHEAST — AN WRITES JOEL, OF HUDSON'S FALSE FRIENDS AND MATE ON THE LITTLE DUTCH SHIP HALF-MOON. THEY SAILED AWAY TO FIND THE ROAD TO CATHAY FOR THE DUTCH EAST INDIA CO. THEY FOUND ENTERED THE HUDSON RIVER AND NEW YORK BAY.
LITTLE IS KNOWN OF HUDSON'S EARLY YEARS, BUT HIS WAS A GALLANT ENDEAVOUR, AND CHANCING TO SEE THE LOG OF WEYMOUTH, IN AMSTERDAM, HE CROSSED TO ENGLAND. CONVINCED THAT WEYMOUTH'S "STRAIT" WAS AT LAST THE LONG SOUGHT "ROAD," HE OBTAINED THE SUPPORT OF SOME MERCHANT ADVENTURERS OF ENGLAND.
IN 1610 HUDSON SET SAIL. THE LITTLE "DISCOVERIE" WAS A FRAIL CORKLE-SHELL OF 55 TONS, WITH A CREW OF 23 MEN, STARTING ON THE MOST PERILOUS VOYAGE KNOWN.

Nast, Keppler, and the

On 17 and 18 October 1996, the National Gallery of Art Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts sponsored a conference on "Political Caricature and Satire," sponsored by the Washington Collegium for the Humanities and hosted by the National Gallery of Art, where a previous draft of this essay was delivered.

BY ROGER A. FISCHER

Since the days of Benjamin Franklin and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, the editorial cartoon has been a creature of commercial journalism as well as graphic art and political commentary, yet from Albert Bigelow Paine to the present, the literature of American political cartooning has been almost altogether on the cartoon as popular art and the cartoonist as political prophet. To be sure, there is usually the *pro forma* concession—a sentence or two; at best a slender paragraph—that editorial cartooning is indeed a facet of commercial journalism, then off into lengthy discourse on political analysis and the aesthetics of caricature. Few authorities, most notably Thomas C. Leonard in his fine 1986 volume *The Power of the Press*, have sought to place cartooning within the larger context of mass print journalism.

A case in point is the genesis of our modern tradition of political cartooning in the United States in the years following the Civil War, heyday of Thomas Nast of *Harper's Weekly* and Joseph Keppler of *Puck*. A scholarly consensus maintains that antebellum American cartoonists were a decidedly inferior lot, save perhaps the enigmatic Frank Bellew when the spirit (or, as it were, spirits) energized the muse. As Charles Press has noted, "These [antebellum] cartoons artistically have all the spontaneous joy of life of a bunch of Uriah Heeps traipsing around preparing for a mortgage foreclosure,"[1] echoing the 1862 lament of Richard Grant White that "many funerals are conducted in a manner far better calculated to minister to the sense of the ridiculous."[2] The key element, then, in establishing the genre of editorial cartooning in the United States was the towering individual artistic genius of cartoonists such as Nast,

THE "BRAINS"

Thomas Nast, "The Brains," *Harper's Weekly*, 21 October 1871, 992.

Mass Market

Keppler, and their compeers, Bernhard Gillam and his brother Victor, Grant Hamilton, Frederick Burr Opper, and Eugene Zimmerman. To the artistic talent and political insights of this gifted generation belongs the credit for creating and making a staple of American political life the editorial cartoon.

With this assessment of talent I have no quarrel. Although I loathe Nast's politics of exclusionary Protestantism, I readily concede that he was a graphic genius and master of political propaganda, and that the least talented artists in the stables of Keppler's *Puck* and Gillam's *The Judge* were far more gifted at their craft than any antebellum American cartoonist, Bellew included. I would note, however, that all this collective genius would have left at best a minuscule mark on American political culture had it coalesced a generation or two earlier, and its greatest masterpieces sold by subscription as limited-edition engravings or hawked by vendors in the streets in the manner of Currier & Ives prints. For Nast to have been Nast and Keppler Keppler required, in addition to uncommon talent, several factors that had nothing to do with artistic skill or political insight. The genesis of mass commercial journalism in the United States shortly before the guns roared at Fort Sumter required quantum improvements in lithography and in the steam-powered printing press to enable larger, faster, cheaper press runs; the technique of carving penciled drawings on boxwood to afford clarity of line when reproduced on bargain basement newsprint; and the growth of New York City into a metropolis of a million souls, a marketing base akin to Tenniel's London and Daumier's Paris. The Civil War fostered the accumulation of capital, much more efficient mail delivery, and a dramatically heightened awareness of national politics. Thus when Nast made the transition from illustrator to cartoonist in the late 1860s, and Keppler pioneered *Puck* a decade later, they enjoyed access to a national stage unknown to their less gifted predecessors.

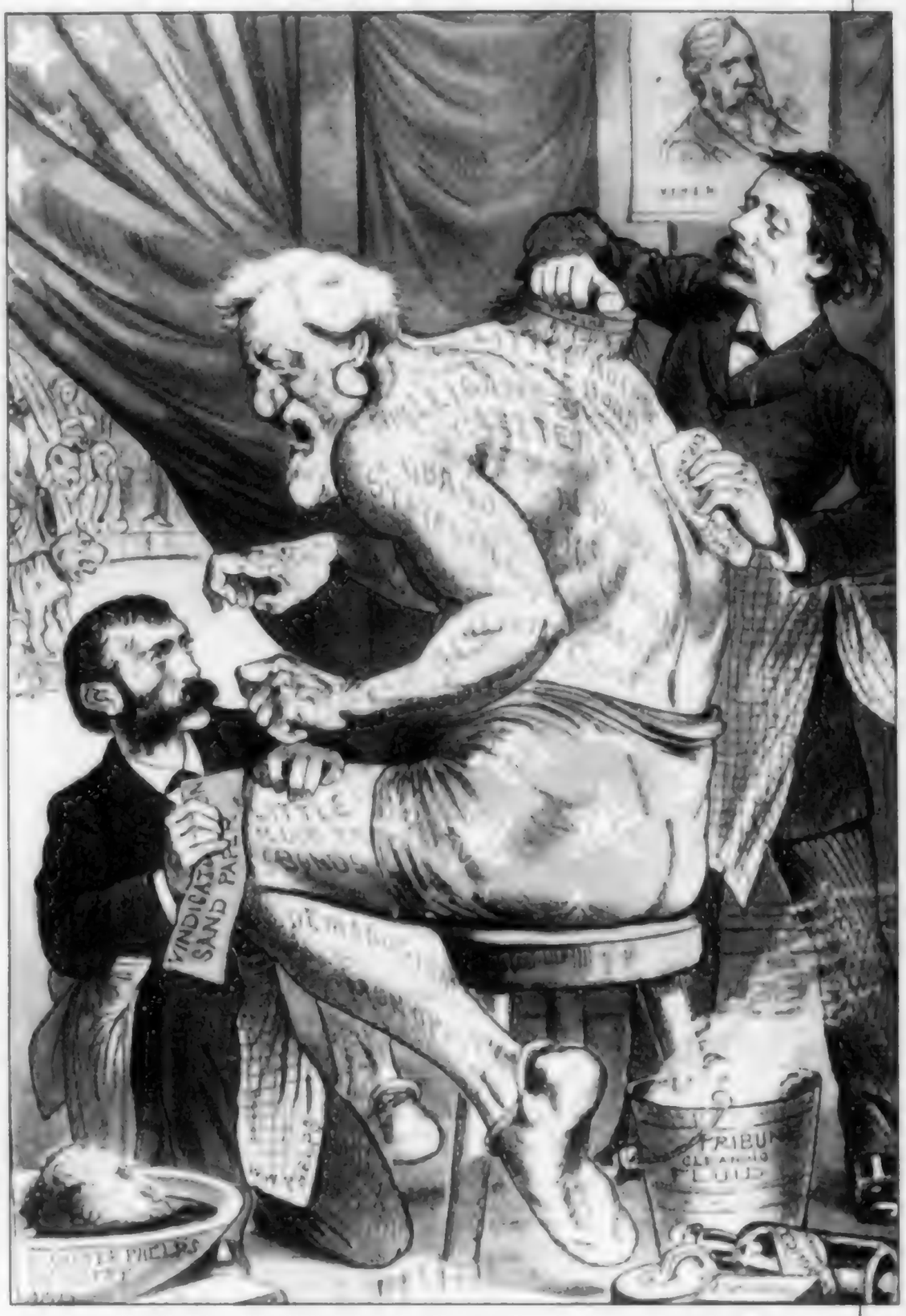
Opportunity also posed challenge. An enlarged metropolitan market embracing a segment of the clerical and blue-collar working classes decreed a diminished common denominator from the days in which political cartooning had been an exercise in snob art, effete punning and double entendres. No longer would weakly drawn political figures anchoring huge bubbles of prose punnery suffice for this mass market. The geographic expansion of the market via subscription into New England, the small town and rural Middle Atlantic, and the midwestern heartland probably brought about a loftier common denominator of linguistic, cultural, and political literacy; but given a commercial need for a balance between national politics and the party wars of Gotham, it added to the mix a remote readership in

POPE LEO XIII—A PHYSIOGNOMICAL STUDY

Joseph Keppler, "Pope Leo XIII—A Physiognomical Study, *Puck*, 24 April 1878, 8-9.

THEY ARE SWALLOWING EACH OTHER

Thomas Nast, "They are Swallowing Each Other," *Harper's Weekly*, 3 August 1872, 608.



Bernhard Gillam, "Love's Labor Lost," *Puck*, 7 May 1884, 160.

need of familiarity with New York politics and compelling reasons to spend ten or twenty seconds per cartoon in acquiring said acumen. It should be noted as well, during a period when even the most splendid Mathew Brady photograph required a laborious conversion to photoengraving on steel plates for reproduction in a weekly tabloid, that a minimal literacy in the graphic art of political events was largely limited to the metropolis, gratis *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, James and Fletcher Harpers' "journal of civilization" *Harper's Weekly*, and kindred New York publications. As evidenced not only by the great commercial success of *Harper's*, *Puck*, *Judge*, *Life*, and other illustrated weeklies but also by the extraordinary popularity during the period of lithographed and engraved prints, *cartes de visite*, ferrotype charms, and other such devices, the American appetite for the visual image was immense, as was the challenge in fulfilling it.

How best to do so? How best to convince this new mass market that the political cartoon was worthy of the seconds necessary to view it, understand it, and reflect upon it? For starters, apply Thoreau's axiom on life to the bad cartoon, that it is "frittered away by detail" and heed his dictum, "simplify, simplify." Banish banal themes, cluttered art work, those damned bubbles and all that superfluous text. Offhand, I can think of only one truly great American political cartoon made so in part by a lengthy caption, Paul Conrad's poignant 1973 portrayal of Richard Nixon as a beleaguered Richard II with Shakespeare's superbly appropriate lament: "O that I were as great as my grief, or lesser than my name! Or that I could forget what I have been, or not remember what I must be now!" A model for the new economy in cartooning was Nast's droll Boss Tweed cartoon "The Brains," two syllables of text and not a wasted line.

True, Nast did not always hold true to this standard. James A. Wales's delightful 4 June 1879 *Puck* back cover "Puck Sends His Compliments to Mr. Nast Once More!" is one of the few truly inspired "in your face" parodies in the history of the genre, where verbal clutter abounds, banality reigns ("Yellow Fever Must and Shall Be Put Down"), and a companion editorial roasts Nast for interminable captions resembling "a chapter from the Patent-Office reports." Yet on his better days (which until

Joseph Keppler, "Where Is He?," *Puck*, 16 November 1892, 192-93.

the mid-1880s far outnumbered his worse ones), whatever the ancillary background clutter, the impact of Nast's message came through with power and clarity. An excellent case in point was his double-page 1871 election-eve masterpiece "The Tammany Tiger Loose," with a Tammany cast-of-thousands looking on as the ferocious tiger mauls the fair maiden of New York republican virtue. Given their greater spaces to fill and the whimsy inherent in gaily colored lithography, the artistic corps of Keppler's *Puck* and Gillam's *Judge* would have found it impossible to adhere to the economy of line of Nast's "The Brains": but in hundreds of memorable cover and centerfold cartoons the impact of their theme came through loud and clear, while ancillary details provided readers hours of enjoyment identifying background caricatures while reveling in the indignities visited upon them.

As essential to the immediacy of impact vital to the success of the mass political cartoon as a meaningful theme articulated with power was the ability of the cartoonist to capture the imagination of a mass national audience with the graphic imagery of compelling caricature. Although Nast's greatest invention was probably himself, not far behind was his visual transformation of the hulking but hardly loutish William Magear Tweed into a caricature for the ages, the very personification of sinister sleaze. Nast's compelling caricatures of such public men as Roscoe Conkling, Benjamin Butler and the cadaverous Samuel Tilden as a desiccated mummy so captivated the public imagination that Keppler and other rivals were virtually required to plagiarize simply so their viewers would quickly recognize the figures in their cartoons. That in Keppler's case this was no matter of laziness or lack of genius or imagination is demonstrated by his magnificent 1878 caricature of Pope Leo XIII as the sum total of the trappings of his *ex cathedra* infallibility and the ultramontane spiritual empire he headed. Such skilled caricature served well the new mass journalism, not only in its own right, but also as added motivation for distant viewers who knew or cared little about the Tweeds, Conklings, Butlers, and Tildens to involve themselves in their machinations.

Establishing these caricatures for instant recognition among the faithful viewers was but one of many means employed by cartoonists to educate a mass audience to read a political cartoon. Another was to develop an essential shorthand of symbolism, beginning with Nast's exploitation of Uncle Sam to personify the American nation and Dame Columbia her lofty ideals. He is credited with birthing the Republican elephant and Democratic donkey, although a careful review of his 2250 *Harper's* cartoons yields no more than a half dozen uses of the latter and dozens of deployments of the fearsome tiger. Other stock symbols for Nast, Keppler, and contemporaries were the goddesses of Peace, Justice, and Liberty, John Bull and the British lion, the Russian bear, Satan and the serpent, the specters or statuary of Washington and Lincoln, and in time poor Tweed as the generic symbol of political sleaze. Repetition also proved effective in educating the public, with a caricature often labeled or otherwise identified until it could stand on its own.

A masterful device pioneered during the period was the running gag, three examples of which merit special recognition. In 1872 Nast's hero Ulysses Grant was opposed by *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, a pompous blowhard so given to unwanted counsel that Lincoln had regarded him as an affliction almost akin to Lee's Army of Northern

Joseph Keppler, "The Worship of the Golden Calf," *Puck*, 21 April 1880, 112-113.

Virginia. Greeley's running mate was Gratz Brown, a Missouri nullity whose likeness Nast reputedly had never seen. So in cartoon upon cartoon during the 1872 campaign, Nast unfailingly drew Greeley with a *What I Know About . . .* volume protruding from his frock coat pocket and a tiny "Gratz Brown" tag hanging from his coattail. In 1884 Keppler and his *Puck* cohorts, primarily Bernhard Gillam before his defection to *Judge*, savaged Republican candidate James G. Blaine repeatedly as a dime museum tattooed man, each tattoo representing a purported Blaine ethical shortcoming. Then in 1888 *Puck* artists began cartooning the diminutive Benjamin Harrison as a tiny figure dwarfed by the huge top hat of grandfather William Henry Harrison. After his accession to the presidency, his *Puck* caricature grew steadily smaller and smaller, until he finally disappeared inside the hat.

A crucial key to educating viewers was for cartoonists to portray their figures in a cultural context familiar to them. During a period when popular culture as we know it was in its infancy, Americans of varying degrees of social status, education, and literacy shared a common cultural heritage that would today be considered somewhat highbrow—the stories of Scripture and Charles Dickens, classical mythology, Shakespeare, the fables of Aesop and *The Arabian Nights*, the opera of Wagner as well as that of Gilbert and Sullivan, even the master painters of the Continent whose works were peddled as cheap prints in the United States. Nast's epic "The Tammany Tiger Loose" was, in fact, a parody on a Jean-Léon Gêrome oil painting currently in vogue. The point is simple. They might know or care little of Blaine's role in the "Mulligan Letters" scandal or his arrogance in stonewalling it, but they did understand Narcissus and his overweening vanity. Or they might know little of Tammany and boss "Honest John" Kelly, but from Gillam's portrayal of him as King Henry V eating the leek of repudiation, they realized full well he had met his comeuppance. A third term in 1880 for Ulysses Grant may have caused confusion, but not Keppler's acid portrayal of it as the worship of the golden calf.

Ultimately, however, the litmus test of the cartoonist's success was whether or not economy of message, clever caricatures, running gags, or portrayals of Blaine as Narcissus or Grant as a pagan idol struck a resonant chord with viewers. To do so, cartoonists must do more than draw with clarity and wit, they must establish a bond with their public that is less intellectual than emotional, or even visceral. The literature of political cartooning abounds with grand statements on how the impact of the great cartoon prompts sea changes in public opinion. If they have done so, it rebuts what little we do know of the psychology of political behavior, that the most influential propaganda has tended not to confront and to challenge, but rather to reinforce and to build on *a priori* beliefs, values, and prejudices. This phenomenon does much to explain Nast's extraordinary hold on a generation of predominantly Republican, overwhelmingly Protestant *Harper's* readers nostalgic for a simpler past. His transformation of Catholic bishops into devouring crocodiles in "The American River Ganges," surely one of Nast's most powerful efforts and arguably the most vicious cartoon ever created by an American artist, was credible in large part because his viewers had been conditioned by generations of lurid anti-Catholic horror stories rooted in the Reformation.

Such was the case as well with the hapless Tweed. The sachem was no saint. A leading player in New York politics during an era of excess and

"WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING AT? TO THE VICTOR BELONG THE SPOILS."

Thomas Nast, "What are You Laughing At? To the Victor Belong the Spoils," *Harpers Weekly*, 25 November 1871, 1097.

spoils, he lived lavishly in a style suggesting an income substantially greater than the sum of its legitimate parts. Yet a generation of revisionist scholarship has debunked the notion that New York was governed by a ring of any sort, much less a "Tweed Ring," for Peter Sweeny, Richard Connolly, and Mayor Oakley Hall were neither lieutenants nor intimates of the more plebeian Tweed. A fraction of the monies he allegedly gleaned from the coffers and boodlers of Gotham would have made his four-million-dollar bail a matter of petty cash, but instead he died in prison a pauper, convicted of a crime only in the court of public opinion.[3] As Thomas Leonard has observed, Nast groped through thirty anti-Tammany cartoons over two years with Tweed in a bit role before he struck the mother lode, a mother lode not because it embodied truth, but because it reinforced so perfectly the prejudices and fears of so many Americans then and since, what Leo Hershkowitz aptly characterized as its "ugly features, small beady eyes, huge banana-like nose, vulturish expression and bloated body . . . . the essence of urban rot, malodorous, the embodiment of all that is evil and cancerous in American municipal and political life."[4]

Most of the attributes of success in political cartoons as a facet of mass commercial journalism—clarity of art and theme, creative caricature, skilled exploitation of symbolism and repetition, imaginative allusions, establishing a rapport with the public—are also those qualities universally acknowledged as keys to success in cartooning as graphic art. Perhaps it is time to ponder, if only for an instant, whether the dollar and the muse are always hostile entities. ●

NOTES:

1. Charles Press, *The Political Cartoon* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), 243.

2. Quoted in Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 9.

3. Roger A. Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures: Explorations in American Political Cartoon Art* (North Haven, CT: Archon Books, 1996), 7-8.

4. Leo Hershkowitz, *Tweed's New York: Another Look* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), xiii.

resources

Macculloch Hall Historical Museum

by Bonnie-Lynn Nadzeika and Alice A. Caulkins

Macculloch Hall Historical Museum, cornerstone of the National Historic District in Morristown, New Jersey, houses collections of English and American fine and decorative arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the Museum is renowned for its collection of works by Thomas Nast (1840-1902). George Macculloch, a Scotsman born in Bombay and educated in Edinburgh, immigrated to the United States with his London actress wife and two children in 1806. He settled in Morristown, purchasing a twenty-six-acre farm where he began his Federal-style mansion in 1810. A sugar importer, teacher and *philosophe*, Macculloch is remembered best for his conception and leadership in planning and building the Morris canal which traversed the state of New Jersey. The canal, hailed throughout America and Europe as an engineering marvel surpassing the Erie Canal, carried

"Good Night," watercolor on board, c. 1884.
One of many self-caricatures that Thomas Nast drew during his career, "Good Night" was a sketch for the final drawing of his autumn 1884 lecture tour. Nast traveled up and down the East Coast and as far west as Lincoln, Nebraska, with actor Walter Pelham who interpreted the artist's sketches.

Above: "The Tammany Tiger Loose—'What are you going to do about it?'" proof, *Harper's Weekly*, 11 November 1871. This double-page cartoon, considered one of the most powerful in the history of political cartooning, is credited with the defeat of the Tweed Ring. It appeared a few days before the municipal election in New York City.

Below: "The Third Term Panic," wood engraving, *Harper's Weekly*, 7 November 1874.
Nast introduced the Republican elephant as an image labeled "The Republican Vote." The Democratic Party is represented by a fox. The *New York Herald*, shown here as an ass under a lion's skin, was considered responsible for the spread of the rumor of Grant's intended third term or "Caesarism."

anthracite coal from Pennsylvania to the iron foundries of New Jersey, and finished products to the marketplaces of the New York area. After 139 years of continuous occupancy by Macculloch's descendants, the house was acquired in 1949 by millionaire philanthropist and former mayor of Morristown, W. Parsons Todd to exhibit his growing private collection in a museum for public enrichment. As a result of his lifelong friendship with Thomas Nast's son Cyril, Todd was able to acquire many of the artist's works now housed at the museum.

Thomas Nast is considered the "Father of American Caricature," and his political satire chronicled and influenced American society and history throughout his lifetime and

"Christmas Plum Pudding," pen and ink on board, *Harper's Bazaar*, 13 January 1883.
This portrait of Thomas Nast's youngest son, Cyril, contains two of the artist's favorite images, the toy horse and the jack-in-the-box. They appear in many guises throughout his illustrations. The setting is the dining room of the Nast house on Macculloch Avenue in Morristown, New Jersey.

beyond. Nast was employed by *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* at the age of sixteen. In 1860, he received his first major assignment, sailing to England to cover the international prizefight between American John C. Heenan and Englishman Thomas Sayers. The artist's next important undertaking was to join Italian liberator Giuseppe Garibaldi to illustrate events of the campaign to unite Sicily and Southern Italy. In August 1862, Nast left *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* to join the staff of *Harper's Weekly*. Nast's coverage of the Civil War for *Harper's Weekly* reached a broad spectrum of the American public. Through his work even those who count not read received commentary about the War Between the States. President Abraham Lincoln is reported to have called Nast his "best recruiting agent."

Nast's popular influence continued throughout the nineteenth century. Ulysses S. Grant credited his election to the presidency to the artist, saying it was "by the pencil of Nast." Nast was also credited with swinging votes to Grover Cleveland in the campaign of 1884. In the 1870s the artist's reputation was further enhanced by his bold cartoons about an immense corruption ring in New York led by William "Boss" Tweed. Due to the threats Nast received from the Tweed Ring, he moved his family to Morristown in the fall of 1871, purchasing 50 Macculloch Avenue the following spring. In 1902 Nast was appointed as consul to Ecuador by President Theodore Roosevelt. He died there of yellow fever after serving only four months.

One of Nast's most outstanding contributions was his creation of political symbols. He is credited with popularizing the elephant as the symbol of the Republican Party and the donkey as the symbol of the Democratic Party. Nast, a staunch Republican, depicted the Democratic Party as various unflattering animal figures including a snake, a fox, a dog, a wolf in sheep's clothing, and notably the Tammany tiger of New York, before settling on the image of the donkey. On 15 January 1870, *Harper's Weekly* ran Nast's first drawing of the Democratic donkey. For a Republican symbol, Nast first used the elephant in the cartoon, "The Third Term Panic," for *Harper's Weekly*, 7 November 1874. Nast also melded several images of Uncle Sam into a tall, gaunt, Lincolnesque image with a wispy beard, top hat, striped trousers, and boots. Perhaps most memorably, Nast created the American image of Santa Claus, the rounded jovial character who today decorates America from October through December.

Approximately sixty percent of Macculloch Hall's collection of Thomas Nast's work was acquired by W. Parsons Todd in the 1950s from Cyril Nast, Thomas Nast's youngest son. Cyril Nast was experiencing financial difficulty and Todd purchased the collection as part of a business arrangement to benefit his childhood friend. Ironically, the descendants of Nast had purchased his works at the Nast estate auctions in 1906 and 1907. Cyril Nast's son, Thomas Nast III, has been generous to Macculloch Hall, donating many original drawings and watercolors. The museum has also continued to purchase Nast's works, most notably a papier-mache oil painting of an angel, a panel from Nast's "Grand Caricaturama," and two Currier and

Ives prints, "Light Artillery" and "The Colored Volunteer."

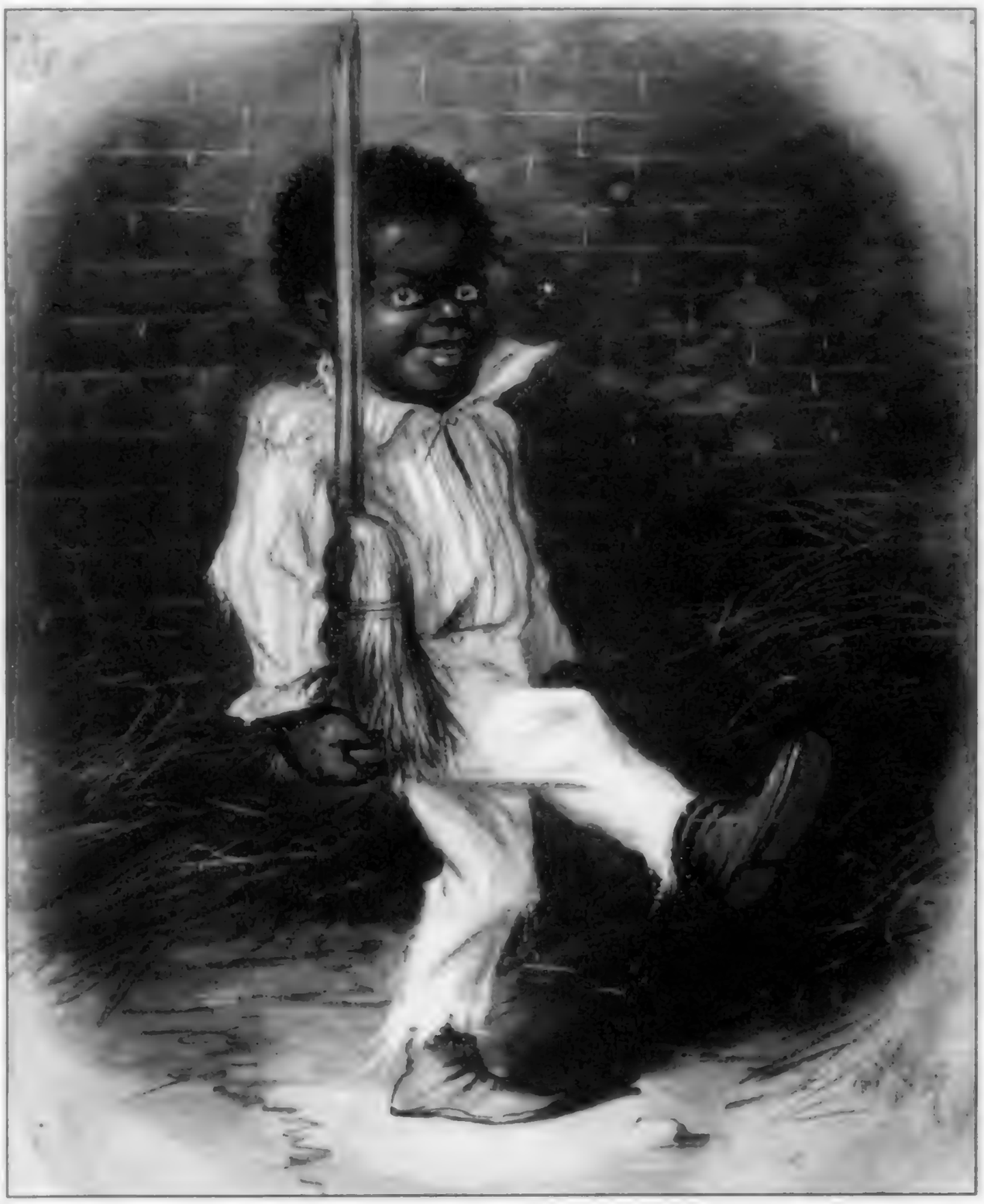
Macculloch Hall's collection includes more than three hundred original works by the artist, two thousand wood engravings published in *Harper's Weekly*, printers' proofs of many works, and a large number of Nast-related photographs, correspondence, illustrated books, and memorabilia including the 1879 silver canteen designed by Tiffany and Company that was given to Nast as a testimonial of their esteem by 3,500 men who had been in the Union Army and Navy.

The largest pieces in the museum's collection are the two panels of Nast's spectacle "The Grand Caricaturama," a history of America from the landing at Plymouth Rock to Andrew Johnson's impeachment in 1867. The thirty-three paintings were originally shown on stage, one after the other, each with an explanatory lecture and musical accompaniment. Today only eight panels are known to exist, five held by the Library of Congress, one by the Joint Free Public Library of Morristown and Morris Township, and two by Macculloch Hall. Panel XIX, "The Last Ditch," is a portrayal of one of the last battles of the Civil War, the Battle of the Crater near Petersburg, Virginia, on 23 July 1864. The original musical accompaniment was "Just Before the Battle, Mother." Panel XXV, "Palace of Tears" is a representation of the Philadelphia National Union Convention of 14 August 1866, an effort to unite warring factions behind President Johnson's Reconstruction policies. Its musical accompaniment was "The Long, Long, Weary Day Was Passed in Tears Away."

Macculloch Hall Historical Museum is committed to Thomas Nast and his work. Nast pieces are on continuous display throughout the period rooms of the museum, and new exhibits continue to be created. The two most recent Nast exhibits were "Thomas Nast and the Glorious Cause" and "A Public Office is a Public Trust: Images of the 1884 Election by Thomas Nast." "The Glorious Cause" traveled to two other venues, including the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center in Ohio. Macculloch Hall also lends examples of Nast's work to other institutions.

Joining Macculloch Hall in Morristown are two institutions that add significantly to the study of Thomas Nast. The Joint Free Public Library of Morristown and Morris Township holds within its Local History Department an archive of Nast correspondence and ephemera, woodcut engravings, and has "Swing Round the Circle" from "The Grand Caricaturama" series on permanent display. The Thomas Nast Society, a non-profit organization headquartered at the Joint Free Public Library, publishes an annual journal and encourages research, preservation, and the exchange of information regarding Nast. Together these three organizations share resources and activities in a collaborative network of primary research and public education.

Macculloch Hall Historical Museum's hours are Thursday and Sunday from 1 PM to 4 PM. A modest admission fee is charged ($3.00 for adults; $2.00 for seniors and students; children under twelve years are admitted free). Group tours and research visits are available by appointment. For additional information, contact Macculloch Hall Historical Museum and Gardens, 45 Macculloch Avenue, Morristown, NJ 07960, (201) 538-2404. ●



"The Colored Volunteer" or "Infant-ry," hand-colored lithograph, 1863. During the Civil War, Nast created five images for Currier & Ives as Union propaganda. Macculloch Hall owns three of these rare medium folio images, "The Colored Volunteer," "Light Artillery," and "Domestic Blockade."

book reviews

Drawn & Quartered: The History of American Political Cartoons

by Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop

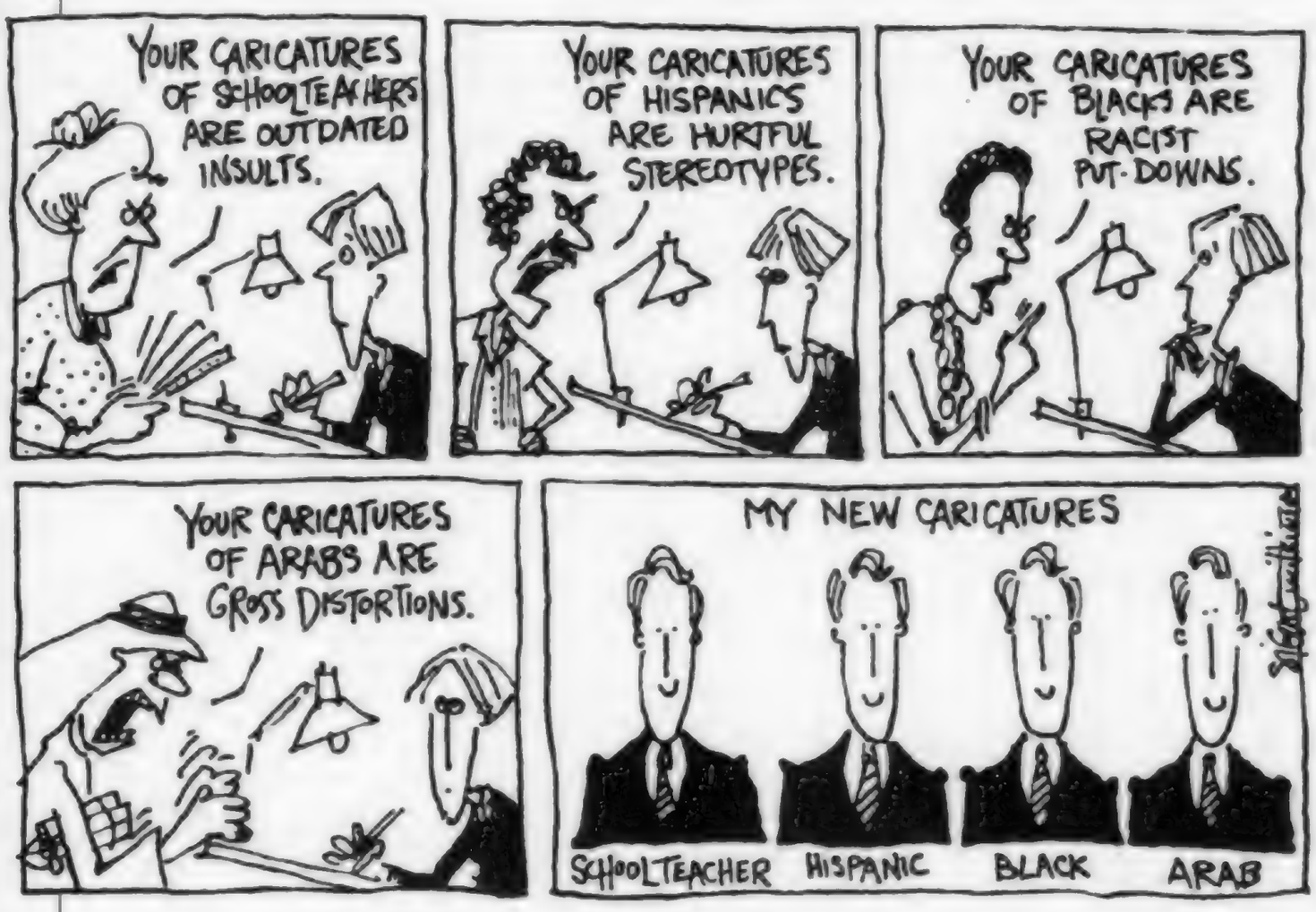
Reviewed by Bruce Wheltle

When William Murrell wrote his trailblazing two-volume *A History of American Graphic Humor* in the 1930s, more than a third of the cartoonists treated in Hess and Northrop's sweeping new history either were not yet professionally active, or had not been born. The Gerrymander was a readily comprehended cartoon image, and commonly understood cultural references included matters as diverse as Tammany Hall and the Lost Generation. Still ahead lay Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, McCarthyism and the Cold War, to say nothing of My-Lai, Watergate, Iran-Contra, and hundreds of staples of contemporary cartoonists' work in the 1990s. In the intervening six decades, many admirable selective cartoon histories have examined American political cartooning of this century and the last, either in the context of art, illustration, caricature, social and cultural change, presidential politics and war or, of course, as collections of particular cartoonists' work. Even more cartoon books of this period have been forgettable. But the level of scholarship has improved over these years, as *INKS* itself bears witness, and as Hess and Northrop graciously recognize in acknowledging their debts.

Murrell's Depression-era history understandably emphasized visual humor on its dust-jacket as "a vernacular record of the social and political history" (dust-jacket of 1933) of our people. One of the best post-Murrell histories was *The Ungentlemanly Art* by Stephen Hess and the late Milton Kaplan (first published in 1968). The book set a high standard of scholarship, with almost 325 images and some seventy-five pages of illustrated footnotes and bibliography. It was attractively written and organized, essentially chronologically, but also along McLuhanesque principles of media, from copperplate etching to wood engraving to lithography to photocomposition and from broadside to magazines to newspapers. It was wisely stinting in its use of hyperactive claims that the images presented possessed attributes of being "acerbic, biting, brilliant, mordant, scathing, or trenchant." In this restraint it recognized that American editorial cartooning has generally been more comfortable and old shoe than acidic and incandescent. Indeed, histories reflecting the ironic qualities of cartooning have kept readers' sensitivities sharp for appreciation of the more infrequent thrusts for the jugular. *The Ungentlemanly Art* established a standard hard to surpass but, even in its 1975 revision, one that is now a generation out of date.

Drawn & Quartered is thus a needed and welcome addition to the bookshelf of political cartoon histories. As an intelligent and perceptive survey of the art, it deserves a place in school and public libraries nationwide. For the scholar and enthusiast, however, the new volume supplements but does not supplant its ancestor. Stephen Hess thus has the distinction of being associated with two of the better histories since Murrell. *The Ungentlemanly Art* is acknowledged as the foundation of *Drawn & Quartered*, although only 25 percent of the 269 images seen in the new book may be found in its predecessor. The continuity between the books lies in Hess's graceful scholarship, in which the development of recurring themes in American life, and the metaphors on which cartoons rely are liberally interpolated.

Drawn & Quartered is organized chronologically and thematically. An introductory essay endeavors to inquire about how successful cartoonists have been "in tweaking the flaws in the democratic system and exposing hypocrisy wherever they find it." (23) Six additional chapters follow a roughly chronological and developmental sequence of the phases of political cartooning, covering periods ranging from more than a century down to only a score of years. Thus "The Birth of a National Identity" (1754-1865) ranges from the colonial period all the way to the close of the Civil War, representing the development of an American voice for cartooning. "The Rise of the American Cartoon" covers 1865-1896; "The Cartoon Comes of Age" between 1896-1918; and the period from 1918-1947 is called "The Art of Uncertainty." The next quarter-century (1947-1974) represents "The Cartoonist Versus the Television" and finally, "Coming Full Circle" covers 1975-1996. The new book does not carry footnotes, and occasionally scholars mentioned in the text are omitted from chapter notes and the bibliography (e.g., Alice Sheppard,



Signe Wilkinson, *Nation*, 17 January 1994.

author of *Cartooning for Suffrage*). The book is printed on a very white coated stock, which does not emulate the character of cartoons printed on matte paper or newsprint.

Many of the themes have their counterparts in the earlier book—diverse career paths into the business, the interplay of idea and execution in creating a successful cartoon, and the shifting ground of cultural references in creating an effective cartoon—but the freshening influences of recent writing and commentary of scholars such as Roger Fischer, Draper Hill, Alice Sheppard and Richard West are evident. One salutary effect is more richly nuanced analysis of cartoonists' work in the context of its times, showing both the considerable strengths and frailties of the men and women (mostly men) who are part of political graphics history. We also see more clearly that these oft-pantheonated creatures frequently were cogs in a large web which included ideologically controlling publishers and tough editors, plus a diverse array of engravers and journalistic colleagues.

"The Birth of a National Identity" pursues the evolution, often from British graphic equivalents, of human and animal symbols from the likes of John Bull and Brother Jonathan to Columbia and Uncle Sam. While many of the key images have been used in Hess's earlier book, the authors have alertly reached into the vast body of material generated over the past thirty years to demonstrate how the referential language of cartoons is continually refreshed by new events and sharp-minded cartoonists. The book begins with Nast's familiar 1871 'Who Stole the People's Money—Do Tell," in which Tweed, Sweeny, Connolly and Hall (principals in the Tweed Ring) are assembled in a circle of fifteen contractors and other co-conspirators in the New York County Court House construction scam, each pointing a finger at the next guy. The introductory chapter closes with a 1982 Paul Conrad cartoon which carries the dry bones caption "Affixing Blame For Our Economic Problems," and depicts President Ronald Reagan pointing at his predecessor Carter, who points at Ford, who points at Nixon. In turn Nixon points skyward to a phantomed celestial gathering of presidents from Lyndon Johnson all the way back to George Washington. In a later chapter, Paul Szep thematically reprises the circle of blame in a 1987 cartoon featuring distinctly earthbound figures from the Reagan-Bush era scandal that came to be called Iran-Contra. Elsewhere, the first Democratic donkey (anonymous, 1837) and first Republican elephant (Nast, 1874) are juxtaposed with a 1977 Arnold Roth cartoon in which a gathering of the Republican National Committee considers a new party symbol, including among other possibilities, the dodo, the turkey, and Mickey Mouse.

The chapter on "The Rise of the American Cartoon (1865-1896)" is largely told in the parallel stories of German immigrant contemporaries Thomas Nast (1840-1902) and Joseph Keppler (1838-1894) and their representative publications, the first as employee and the second as entrepreneur and owner. Nast's years at the Harper brothers' *Harpers Weekly* (1862-1887), with his sumptuously executed wood engravings, and Keppler's multi-hued glories of color lithography as partner in Keppler and Schwarzmann during his *Puck* years (1877-1894) are two alternative versions of the American success dream, well summarized here.

The past one hundred years is treated in four chapters which account for slightly more than half the book, suggesting maturation (1896-1918), doubt (1918-1947), marginalization (1947-1974) and renewal (1975-1996). The rivalry between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst as they moved from their St. Louis and San Francisco newspapers, respectively, to do battle at the helm of their flagship New York papers, *The World*, and the *New York Journal*, respectively, is recounted as the stuff of legend. Today's globally-oriented media moguls might well have been weaned on competitive inspiration arising from this period.

Clarence Batchelor, Jacob Burck, Homer Davenport, Daniel Fitzpatrick, Herbert Johnson, John McCutcheon, Robert Minor, Frederick Opper, Richard Outcault, Boardman Robinson, Vaughn Shoemaker, William Walker, and Art Young are among the overlapping generations of accomplished cartoonists whose work is remembered by, or at least recognizable to, longtime students of the profession. Final chapters examine

the works of Tony Auth, Herbert Block, Jim Borgman, Paul Conrad, Jeff Danziger, John Fischetti, Etta Hulme, Kevin Kallaugher, Jeff MacNelly, Doug Marlette, Bill Mauldin, Patrick Oliphant, Mike Peters, Paul Szep, Tom Toles, Signe Wilkinson, and Don Wright among others. Excluding anonymous images, 107 artists are represented.

Drawn & Quartered is in several unfortunate respects the product of a faster-paced image-churning age which it chronicles and to some extent decries: there are fewer, and often smaller images than one might hope for, and there are considerably fewer artists illustrated or even mentioned whose careers predated the 1970s. In *The Ungentlemanly Art*, a full-page broadsheet of a Homer Davenport cartoon from Hearst's *New York Journal* of 1896 is given a nearly full-page reduced treatment; in the new book it is given similar treatment, but the limitations of the horizontal format and smaller overall book size render the image approximately two-thirds the size of its earlier presentation. The cartoon depicts a huge-bellied Mark Hanna, clothed by Davenport in his trademark suit checked with dollar signs, as a statue replacing Washington's at the U.S. Sub-Treasury on Wall Street. Its visual effectiveness depends on the delicacy of the cartoonist's penwork, combined with the grandeur of the seven-column front-page spread, into whose typography the cartoon is mortised. In its earlier presentation, some semblance of its original impact is achieved in presenting an entire newspaper page on which every word of body type is still legible; in the new example, the cartoon is conveyed, but the newsprint is a mere abstraction, conveying the *idea* of typography.

One lamentable aspect of what we are seeing then is not cartoon history as an explosion of information, but as a compression and crystallization of previously anthologized images. Granted, a history is not an encyclopedia, and the chronicling of time's passage means that something has to give in order to include new works within a limited space. Yet we find fewer and smaller pages, fewer and smaller images, and a diminution in the number of historical cartoonists mentioned or afforded even a representative example of their work. Moreover, many of these figures are less likely to be remembered, because they are dead, than the ones afforded relatively lavish coverage.

Dozens of cartoonists treated in the earlier history with at least a recounting of their dates and a representative image have disappeared and, similarly, countless others who rated at least a mention have vanished entirely. Surely Peggy Bacon, Clare Briggs, C. G. Bush, Hugh Haynie, Tom Little, George Luks, Ranan Lurie, Charles Macauley, H. T. Webster, and Eugene Zimmerman do not deserve to be among the disappeared. Yet contrariwise, more than a third of the images included are accounted for by thirteen artists whose work is considerably more accessible by reason of an ample historical record or active anthologizing. Worthy though they are, Nast, Herblock, Mauldin, and Oliphant combined account for one-sixth of the images. On the other hand, several undeservedly neglected cartoonists have been rescued from oblivion—notably Laura Foster, Oliver Harrington, Herbert Johnson and George Fisher—but these are exceptions.

Some beautifully effective cartoons are included in *Drawn & Quartered*, such as two by Jeff Danziger and one by Don Wright, in which both the landscape-format page (which measures 7 x 9 inches) and the scale of the drawings are precisely matched, because the book is close to original publication size of modern cartoons. The scale of the book carries modern cartoons adequately, but not older ones. Indeed, the size and shape of the book seem designed to telegraph the message "cartoon book" on bookstore shelves rather than "history book."

The problem with some of the reduced images is important because we interpret what we see on the basis of our prior knowledge, and the reader is not enlightened about the vastly larger scale of many nineteenth century magazine images. For example, Thomas Nast's familiar image of Tweed in defeat, titled "What Are You Laughing At? To the Victor Belong the Spoils," originally occupied a space slightly greater than 11 x 9 inches as a front page in *Harper's Weekly*; in *Drawn & Quartered* it occupies 4-1/2 x 3-3/4 inches, or one-sixth of the original. A double-page spread in the huge folio *Harper's Weekly* (overall size approximately 16 x 22 inches) could easily carry an image size of 280 square inches. Think of this as a 24 inch diagonal television screen that did not flicker. With the arrival of *Puck* only slightly smaller, the still picture even went to color, richly and effectively employed. Yet Bernard Gillam's magnificent "Phryne Before the Chicago Tribunal," one of the James G. Blaine "tattooed man" cartoons appears (expectedly, in black and white) at one-twelfth its original size, but without discussion of the impact of size in the powerful nineteenth century medium. *The Ungentlemanly Art* did discuss this, albeit briefly. As a teaching tool, all histories of this intensely visual medium, not just the present book, would benefit mightily from more consistent attention to giving context to a cartoon's original size relative to its later reproduction.

One of the conceptual strengths of the book is the use of relatively detailed captions, and frequent juxtapositions of fine little caricatures and self-caricatures of cartoonists near their works. Unfortunately, an excessive number of these captions appear to have gone to the printer with an inadequate proofreading. The surnames of Charles Nelan and Elkanah Tisdale (creator of the Gerrymander) are misspelled; Jacob Burck is spelled both correctly and incorrectly on the same page; *Cartoons Magazine* becomes singular, and ordinary words like "accidentally" and "aggressive" are misspelled. In the text, the surname of Nikita Khrushchev transliterates in a unique form. The birth dates for several cartoonists, including Homer Davenport (1867-1912), Daniel Fitzpatrick (1891-1969), and Charles Nelan (1854-1904) are given erroneously. There are other misspellings, carried by the magic of computer applications into the index as well, but the only unforgivable one is against the wit and memory of Walt

Kelly: a feisty chicken introduced by the sainted creator of *Pogo* during the McCarthy scourge is identified as "Miss Bombah" when, as any damfool who was alive and could read knows, she is actually the noted Rhode Island Red "Sis Boombah." (sometimes "Miz" or "Miss Boombah") for reasons too obvious to require explanation.

Drawn & Quartered deserves a generous reception. In placing between covers so diverse and contentious a subject, the authors have attempted a daunting task. ●

Hess, Stephen, and Sandy Northrop. *Drawn & Quartered: The History of American Political Cartoons.* Elliott & Clark Publishing. 1996. 164 p. bib. index. ISBN 1-880216-39-6 hbk. $29.95.

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100 Years of American Newspaper Comics

Edited by Maurice Horn

Reviewed by Robert C. Harvey

An abbreviated version of this review was prepared for publication in The Comics Journal

This time, let there be no shilly-shallying: Maurice Horn's latest perpetration, *100 Years of American Newspaper Comics*, is a travesty of scholarship and a mockery of historicity. This book is so seriously flawed—its assertions so dubious, its facts so frequently wrong—as to be worthless as a resource. No field of academic inquiry or interest, no matter how impoverished its libraries, can be improved by the advent of a wholly unreliable reference work like this. Random House should be ashamed of itself.

Strong words, I agree. But the last times Horn came among us with his *World Encyclopedia of Comics* (Chelsea House, 1976) and his *World Encyclopedia of Cartoons* (Chelsea House, 1980), we were too gentle. We welcomed the attention that these compendious tomes bestowed on cartooning. And while we painstakingly pointed out the errors in fact and judgement that ran through the text like water through a sieve, we were polite. We said we hoped the next editions of the books would be corrected. Until that could happen, we said—patiently, hopefully—we would accept Horn's books and use them. And we would be everlastingly thankful.

But there has been no revised second edition of either book. And the first editions have been scattered hither and yon and now sit on the shelves in reference libraries throughout the land, where their errors incubate and infect new generations of unsuspecting scholars with a contagion of inaccuracy and delusion. Horn is now back among us with more of the same—more errors, more of the claptrap of his misapprehensions about the medium, its workings and its history, more wrong-headed appraisals masquerading as well-considered assessments. Had we been more forthright with him before, perhaps he would have learned his lesson and kept silent on subjects about which he knows only enough to be dangerous.

This time, let us not make that mistake again.

Before I rehearse the evidence upon which these fulminations rest, let me applaud the organization of the book and the work of Horn's helpers. The organization is entirely straight-forward: descriptive histories of scores of comic strips are arranged by titles in alphabetical order, encyclopedia-style. A neat touch is that the beginning and ending dates for each strip are given immediately below the strip name, which serves as the title for each entry. (But only the years are given, not month or day—a tell-tale omission.)

Although by far the majority of the material is written by Horn, he recruited several others to contribute individual entries, and these contributors all seem responsible reporters and informed students of the medium. I read several of the entries written by these assistants (every entry carries the initials of its author), and while I did not find them as rife with error as Horn's entries are, they were all subjected to his editorial ministrations: who can say how many errors he might have introduced while editing the work of others? Because we cannot say—and because so much of the editor's work (everything initialed "M.H.") is laden with mistakes—we cannot rely upon this book, even though we know that many of those who contributed to it have done reliable work in other contexts. Here, they have participated in a charade, no doubt hoping their conscientious work would rescue Horn's posturing; but in the end, their work is rendered as useless as his by reason of the company they keep.

So just how laced with error is this book?

Through and through. Errors abound. In the first fifteen minutes of browsing—without, in other words, looking very hard, just thumbing pages and stopping at a few familiar strip titles—I found errors everywhere I stopped. For instance, Don Flowers' *Oh, Diana!* began in 1933, not in 1940 as Horn has it. (*Oh, Diana!* may, in fact, be a retitling of a 1931 Flowers strip called *Diana Dane*.)

Because I have written a biography of Milton Caniff, I turned to the

entries about his strips almost at once. I knew enough about his work to determine, without checking any other source, how accurate (or inaccurate) Horn was. Alas, the Caniff strip entries bubble with bias and error. Horn asserts that Caniff decided to locate *Terry and the Pirates* in China; every history of the medium (and Caniff himself) says it was Captain Joseph Patterson, head of the Tribune-News Syndicate, who dictated the locale for the strip. Horn believes that when Caniff left *Terry* at the end of 1946, he abandoned the strip in a state of "inconclusion" (meaning, I suppose, inconclusiveness). Hardly. Caniff worked very hard to end his tenure on the strip with a conclusive moment, one which also permitted his successor to take the strip in any direction he might choose. (And it was a moment that occurred in both the daily strip and the Sunday page. Considering that Sunday pages were prepared six weeks before dailies were, this meant Caniff planned it all very very carefully, a circumstance decidedly the opposite of the situation suggested by Horn's diagnosis.)

Horn says Caniff left *Terry* to create a new strip for Marshall Field because "negotiations for his new contract [with the Tribune-News Syndicate] broke down." Hardly. He left because Field offered him a better deal: more money, complete editorial control, and sole ownership of the feature. Since Field made the offer when Caniff had two years to go on his current two-year Tribune-News contract, he was scarcely negotiating a "new" contract at the time. He had, in fact, just signed a new contract.

In the *Steve Canyon* entry, Horn says the strip started 19 January 1947; hardly. It was 13 January. He tells us that Happy Easter was a "mechanic type"; hardly. Happy was a fugitive from the U.S. Cavalry and wore the uniform of the historic 7th (Custer's bunch). Horn refers to the Duchess of Denver as "poisonous"—a doubtful description since she never poisoned anyone that I know of. She was, in fact, a curiously meek and submissive person. (Her relationship with her lover was a perfect psychic pairing: she was a masochist; he, a sadist. Neither was a poisoner.)

Horn says that Steve Canyon's Air Force adventures included "flying all kinds of hush-hush new aircraft" as if Canyon were a test pilot. Steve doubtless flew one or two of these, but not enough to justify Horn's implication. In a run-through of characters in the strip, Horn mentions such enlisted men as Sweet Joseph and Chigger: neither, to my knowledge, ever appeared in the strip, but both appeared in a *Pageant* magazine article about Caniff as examples of the kind of rough sketch Caniff did when devising new characters.

Later, Horn lists all the artists who, at one time or another, assisted Caniff on the strip, but he does so in a way that suggests that Caniff took on assistants after the circulation of *Steve Canyon* began to slip during the Vietnam War. Not so. The people he lists all made their contributions to the strip before 1960.

To return for a moment to the

Terry entry, Horn has further skewed the history of this strip by slandering George Wunder, Caniff's successor on the strip. Horn says Wunder's "drawings were stiff and graceless, his depiction of characters heavy-handed, and his compositions static." George Wunder was never Milton Caniff; and in his last years on the strip, his characters' physiognomy was certainly peculiar. But in his early years, Wunder was a marvel. His use of black was often stunning; his compositions were dramatic, often startlingly so; and his renderings of figures, at least as fluid and graceful as anything in the Caniff canon. Horn's evaluation of Wunder's work, in other words, is entirely a matter of opinion—his own. And such a broadside of subjective criticism wholly unsupported by the opinions of others (or by specific analytical examination of the works in question) has no place in a reference work. Subjective critical evaluations of works of art in reference books ought to represent a consensus of scholarly and critical opinion. Here, they are simply Horn's personal appraisals.

Having uncovered as much warped information as this in the first fifteen minutes of looking into Horn, I settled back to comb the volume more carefully, looking up other favorite strips of mine. The results confirmed my first impression: this book is a fraud. As a reference work, it is a snare and a delusion. Let me list a few of the things I unearthed in about an hour: *Bobby Thatcher* was produced by George Storm, not Robert Storm as Horn alleges. Russell Patterson's *Mamie* strip began 16 July 1950, not 1951. In discussing the Lawrence Lariar-John Spranger strip, which started as *Bodyguard* then became *Ben Friday* and finished as *The Bantam Prince*, Horn describes the tubby young monarch who usurped the title as "a swarthy little prince," but the prince was fair-skinned in all the reproductions I have seen. In tracing the long and tangled lineage of those who produced *Blondie*, Horn finishes by saying the strip is now drawn by Dean Young and Stan Drake, but Young only writes the strip; it is drawn by Drake. In the entry on *The Lone Ranger*, Horn says Tonto called the Lone Ranger "Kemo Sabay"; the correct spelling of this expression is "kemo sabe." On another occasion, he refers to Dudley Fisher's Sunday family-neighborhood feature, *Right Around Home*, as "a talking bird strip."

Some of these errors are trivial, admittedly. I cite them here simply by way of demonstrating how freighted with mistakes the book is. Virtually every other entry I examined had some sort of outright error or fictitious factoid in it, as in the entry on Roy Crane's *Wash Tubbs*, for example. Horn says it debuted 14 April 1924; actually, it was 21 April. He says Crane was persuaded to produce this daily gag strip about a grocery store clerk instead of the "sophisticated slice of big-city life" strip he had wanted to create. Never heard that story before, and I just finished listening to a taped interview with Crane in which he discusses how *Wash* was discovered by the cartoon editor of NEA, Charles N. Landon.

According to Crane, he had not given the concept for the strip very much thought at all. He worked up the comic strip in his spare time in the art department of the *New York World*. When Landon realized that Crane had taken the Landon correspondence cartoon course, he bought Crane's strip so he could claim that another Landon graduate had achieved success as a syndicated cartoonist. We cannot expect Horn to have heard this taped interview, but the story about how Crane got *Wash Tubbs* syndicated is pretty well-known among comic strip historians worthy of the name.

A couple of paragraphs later, Horn asserts that Wash "grew in years" as soon as he left grocery clerking and began wandering the seven seas in search of treasure. I am not aware that Wash ever grew any older than he was at the strip's beginning. But Horn is soon off on another fanciful flight: he says that what distinguishes *Wash Tubbs* from such other strips of the time as *Oliver's Adventures* is that *Wash* had "openly erotic overtones." Openly erotic? What does that mean? The women were depicted nude? Wash's romantic encounters included bedroom scenes? "Openly erotic," it turns out, means simply that Wash met one beautiful member of the curvaceous gender after another, and fell in love with them as soon as he saw them. Seems more like episodes of innocent adolescent infatuation than open eroticism.

But Horn is not celebrated for his precision with language. He spends a paragraph trying to describe Crane's graphic specialty—the creation of an almost photographic quality in his drawings by liberal use of light- and dark-gray tones that can be chemically produced in a drawing paper called Craftint doubletone. But Horn's attempts at explanation are so lingo-laden as to be virtually devoid of meaning. For instance, he states that Crane ". . . allied a forceful pen-line that sometimes resembled brush-work to a complex of atmospheric effects achieved with the judicious application of Doubletone." "Complex of atmospheric effects" indeed. Since he never explains what "Doubletone" is, only those who already know what he is talking about can understand what he referring to. But Horn's vacuous vaporizings in the book are not confined to the Crane entry. From the entry on *Scorchy Smith*, we have his description of Noel Sickles' contribution to the appearance of Caniff's *Terry*: "the compositions were opened up by way of airy perspectives against which the characters took on added relief." "Airy perspectives"? Does he mean "panels with blank space for background rather than detailed renderings of furniture or landscape"? "Added relief"? Does he mean that against the stark white of the blank background, the characters stood out in bold relief? Further in the same entry, Horn describes Sickles' style as "more pictorial than graphic." In common parlance, "pictorial" and "graphic" are virtually synonymous. Does he mean that Sickles drew pictures that were more photographic than linear?

Despite his maladroitness at describing Roy Crane's pictorial achievements in *Wash Tubbs*, at least he recognizes that Crane did something unusual. Horn never even

mentions the distinctive hachuring that distinguishes Frank Miller's *Barney Baxter*. But that is not surprising. Although Horn is proclaimed as "one of the foremost international authorities on the comics," he displays no particularly penetrating understanding of the visual character of the medium. Indeed, he seems to have no eye for pictures or graphic technique whatsoever. He expends a half-page on Gus Arriola's *Gordo* without once mentioning the stunning design quality of the Sunday pages in the last decades of the strip's run—the virtuoso deployment of color, shape, and texture to achieve startling visual effects that often were integral to the strip's gag that day. His daily strips were also often designed for visual impact.

In fact (although you would not know it by reading Horn's entry on *Gordo*), Arriola's strip went through three sharply different stylistic phases. In the first early forties material, his artwork was strictly MGM cartoon (at which animation studio Arriola had worked before getting his strip syndicated). Next came a nearly realistic treatment that lasted into the 1950s. Then in the middle of the decade, Arriola severely simplified his drawing style: for awhile, Gordo and his friends occupied environs that looked almost cubist. What emerged by the 1960s was a beautifully simple style with a bold fluid line and decorative use of solid black.

Horn does not mention any of this. But he does say Gordo has a big moustache (he does not) and is pursued romantically by two women at the same time, the harridan Widow Gonzales and his housekeeper, Tehuana Mama. True, the Widow Gonzales chased after Gordo in the early days of the strip, but Tehuana Mama is a character from the last decade of *Gordo's* run and was not around when the ravenous Widow was working her worst. (And Juan Pablo is not a windbag raconteur either; he is a quiet, mousy sort of fellow—albeit with a large moustache.)

This is the sort of misinformation you find while wandering through Horn's book. But for a succinct example of the sort of damage his kind of slovenly scholarship can do, the entry on Pete Hoffman's *Jeff Cobb* takes the prize. The entry is only four paragraphs long, but Horn makes a serious mistake in each of three of them. Horn says Hoffman relinquished the drawing of the strip to Winslow Mortimer, who performed the art chores for the last three years of the strip's 1954-1975 run. Two errors here. Reading this assertion, Hoffman wrote Horn with copies to *Inks* and colleagues: "No *Jeff Cobb* artwork was relinquished to Winslow Mortimer or to anyone else. All of the artwork during the 1954-1978 life of the strip (twenty-one years domestically; three additional years abroad) was done by myself until 1978 when the strip ended. The only exception was part-time assistance on lettering and backgrounds for several years."

Horn's fraudulent statements about who drew the strip are in the context of denigrating descriptions of the strip: Hoffman drew in "a rather bland style"; "the writing deteriorated into a collection of pulp-story clichés"; and the "downward path" that the strip followed to its demise. While Horn may be entitled to his opinions on such matters (however misplaced they are in a reference work), these valuative remarks when coupled to his false assertions about who drew the strip create the impression that Hoffman was a lumbering hack. And that is scarcely the case. But let me return to this in connection with Horn's other error.

For years Hoffman had ghosted *Steve Roper*, written by Allen Saunders. Horn says that to repay Hoffman, Saunders contributed "anonymously" a number of continuities to *Jeff Cobb*. Anyone who has any familiarity with Hoffman's strip knows immediately that this statement is false. One of the things that distinguished *Jeff Cobb* was Hoffman's preference for telling his stories with a minimum of verbiage. Sometimes whole daily installments would carry the narrative forward without a word appearing in either caption or speech balloon: Hoffman deftly managed his panel compositions to let the pictures tell the story. It was a tour de force of visual storytelling. This kind of performance is clearly the work of an artist not a wordsmith. While Saunders could draw a little, his forte was plotting and dialoguing not storytelling with pictures alone. In his letter, Hoffman sets the record straight: "Allen Saunders . . . never contributed (anonymously or otherwise) any continuities to *Jeff Cobb* . . . for better or worse, all of the writing was done by me."

As an example of incompetent history and ignorant attitudinizing, the *Jeff Cobb* entry is a gem. It is so wrong that it verges on libel.

Given Horn's myopia with respect to graphic technique, it is predictable that the pictorial element in this book is as vacuous as his persiflage. In an extensive color section, the color itself is somewhat washed-out and sometimes muddy. Sometimes only fragments of strips are reprinted; so we have only the first two tiers of a *Moon Mullins* Sunday—with no Moon in sight. Other color samples are also missing any clear depiction of the title characters: *Happy Hooligan*, *Captain Easy* (almost invisible), *Terry* (ditto), *Steve Canyon*, *Jungle Jim*, *Pogo*, *On Stage*. Throughout the book, individual panels from daily strips are reprinted in black-and-white, but they are often enlarged to fit a page layout—with disastrous consequences for the appearance of the artwork.

One might suppose from this diatribe that my objection to Horn's book is rooted in my disagreement with his opinions. That is always the situation in such instances. We are all egocentric, after all. But in Horn's case, my aversion is grounded in something more than simple difference of opinion. Fact is, I have little faith in the soundness of Horn's judgement. To put it plainly, he frequently does not seem to know what he is talking about. In the introduction of the book, for instance, he defines a comic strip as follows: it is ". . . characterized by a narrative told in a sequence of pictures, a continuing cast of characters, the inclusion of dialogue and/or text within the picture frame, as well as by a dynamic method of storytelling that would compel the eye to travel forward from one panel to the next. This last distinction is very important in that it separates the comics proper

from most of the pictorial narratives of centuries past in which compositions were static and mainly served as illustrations to the text or the captions."(15-16)

"A dynamic method of storytelling that would compel the eye to travel forward from one panel to the next." Balderdash. He is unable to present any examples of this "dynamic method." That is because there is no such thing. What compels the eye forward from panel to panel is simple sequence. But Horn does not understand this; so to him, the process is a mystery—a secret ingredient, an unspecifiable "dynamic "

It is quite true that it is necessary to make a distinction between comic strip narration and the pictorial narratives of previous centuries. But the difference is that in comic strips the action is depicted in as nearly a continuous way as possible. That is the secret "dynamic": continuity of action, scene, character. A piddling point, perhaps. But I tend not to trust the judgement of a self-proclaimed comics expert who cannot tell us (or show us, even) what the mysterious "dynamic" of comic strips is. If he cannot describe the essential nature of the medium to us, how can we be expected to take his word for it when he says George Wunder's drawings are "stiff and graceless" or Pete Hoffman's "bland"?

The book's introductory material is an absolute treasure, an ample if unintended demonstration of its author's fatuous critical stance as well as his shortcomings as a historical scholar. In the opening sections of the book we find a "chronology" of the first one hundred years that lists events by year (as it did in the Chelsea House book) but does not give month or day; so we learn that Roy Crane's *Wash Tubbs* and Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie* both started in 1924, but we do not know which came first. Not that sequence made any difference here, but why give a chronology without complete dates?

But dates do concern Horn in another context. In his introductory essay, he takes severe umbrage at the decision of "a small coterie of self-proclaimed experts (with not one of the recognized historians of the medium among them)" in proclaiming 1895 as the birth year of the comic strip. Horn favors 1896. He admits that the matter has caused considerable debate "among scholars." But he says the 1896 date has been "upheld by every historian from Coulton Waugh on, and it has been officially reaffirmed by an international panel of scholars meeting in Lucca, Italy, in 1989." The erroneous claim for the year 1895, Horn says, "met with some initial success," but in proclaiming 1996 the anniversary year, "good sense and good scholarship again prevailed." I wonder if his opinion would be at all different if Random House had been able to bring Horn's book out in 1995 instead of 1996.

In any case, he offers no substantial evidence in support of his contention beyond asserting that R.F. Outcault's Yellow Kid did not acquire that name until 1896. Perhaps Horn also favors `96 because that was the year the circulation war between Hearst and Pulitzer began. Hearst did not acquire his New York newspaper until late in 1895; and he did not launch his much touted Sunday comics supplement until 18 October 1896. It was during this battle for readers that the Yellow Kid proved the commercial value of comics, and the centennial of the comic strip celebrates the dawn of the marketplace potency of comics more than anything else. Without that commercial value, comic strips would never have developed. But Horn says nothing of any of this. He does not cite much actual history, despite his oft-cited credentials as a historian.

To rehearse briefly the key moments in the Yellow Kid's history—the character that was eventually dubbed the Yellow Kid first appeared in a humor magazine called *Truth* with the issue dated 2 June 1894. A later cartoon from that magazine (also with the Yellow Kid character in it) was reprinted in Pulitzer's *New York World* on 17 February 1895. On 5 May of that year, the first "Yellow Kid" cartoon *drawn expressly for newspaper publication* appeared. And on 5 January 1896, the bald waif first appeared in a yellow gown—earning him his nickname. According to Bill Blackbeard (in *R. F. Outcault's Yellow Kid:* Kitchen Sink Press, 1995), the first *comic strip* (a narrative sequence of words and pictures in which the verbal and the visual blend to make sense) to appear in a newspaper was published in Hearst's *Journal American* 25 October 1896. Take your choice: which of these milestones marks the beginning of newspaper comics?

But all this is somewhat beside the point. My point here is that Horn does not regale us with any of this history. No facts, no discussion. Just his simple oracular pronouncement that 1896 is the official birth year. If he is the critic-historian he claims to be, it would be the work of less than a quarter-hour to muster the facts assembled here. His cavalier attitude about such matters dramatizes the reasons for my distrust of his evaluations of the work of cartoonists: since he does not take the trouble to marshall the facts to support his interpretation of history, we may assume that he is equally nonchalant about supporting evidence for his opinions.

Bad history. Bad scholarship. And, even, bad criticism (a field of endeavor which often supports the work of opinionated ignoramuses). But Horn's book is clearly not supposed to be a scholarly enterprise. Rather, it is a bald-faced attempt to cash in on the Centennial: its commercial value was clearly more important to its editor and its publisher than any historical or referential worth. And that is too bad.

No, it is more than too bad. It is a monstrous hoax. Judging from the organization of the book, it appears to be a reference book. And the appearance breeds disaster for scholarship in comics: because this book has been published, it will be in hundreds of libraries, and many of its readers, those unversed in the finer points of cartoon artistry, will take Horn's word for gospel. And it isn't. It is bad news. ●

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100 Years of American Newspaper Comics. Maurice Horn, ed. New York: Grammercy Books/Random House, 1966. 413p. bibl. ISBN 0-517-12447. $29.95

The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III

by Diana Donald

Reviewed by Katherine Hart

Eighteenth century satirical prints, as Diana Donald points out in her new book on the subject, have been thoroughly catalogued but seldom critically discussed. This can be partly attributed to their status as neither fish nor fowl—considered to be marginal cultural documents by historians and aesthetically unworthy artifacts of popular culture by art historians. There are, of course, exceptions in the two pioneering works of M. Dorothy George *English Political Caricature* (1959) and *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire* (1967); Herbert M. Atherton's *Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth* (1974); Ronald Paulson's essays on James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson in *Representations of Revolution* (1983); David Bindman's *The Shadow of the Guillotine*, and Draper Hill's groundbreaking biography of Gillray (1965). Two excellent articles published in the last ten years examine individual prints by Gillray. Jonathan Bate's article "Shakespearean Allusion in English Caricature in the Age of Gillray" in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1986) contains a brilliant discussion of Gillray's *Weird Sisters*, and Lora Rempel tackles Gillray's scathing images of George III in "Carnal Satire and the Constitutional King: George III in James Gillray's Monstrous Craws at a New Coalition Feast" in the journal *Art History* (1995). Donald herself has previously contributed to this list with her essay, "Characters and Caricatures: The Satirical View" in the Tate Gallery's exhibition catalogue on the work of Joshua Reynolds (1986).

What has been missing in the last thirty years is a critical and scholarly overview of the origins and history of the great explosion of English satirical prints in the second half of the eighteenth century. Donald's handsome and amply illustrated *The Age of Caricature* fills this need magnificently. Thoroughly researched and scholarly in its scope, this book attempts to shed light on some nagging questions about Georgian caricature. The book is structured as a series of essays which deal with issues of audience, patronage, and the production of satirical prints. As Donald points out, satirical prints cannot be "read" in a straightforward manner and there has been little work done on "the relationship of idiom and meaning, or to interpret the prints as an expressive art form which conditioned and did not merely respond to public opinion." (44)

In her introduction, "The Laughing Audience," Donald, who is professor of Art History and head of the Department of History of Art and Design at the Manchester Metropolitan University, does a great service to the literature by gathering together a series of contemporaneous images of crowds standing outside London print shops (which have been published individually but never together in one volume). She also lists the prominent print dealers, the location of their shops, the type of prints they produced and the relation of these factors to the make-up of their clientele. One of the main theses of this book is the variety of audiences for these prints and the evidence of the constant interaction between high and low culture. This "collision" of cultures, according to Donald, "ultimately helps one to make sense of the bewildering variety of styles, formats, media, and levels of sophistication evident in the prints." (9) Donald offers the most thorough discussion yet of contemporaneous attitudes to caricature and satire, as well as a description of how they were collected and displayed.

The status of the professional satirical printmaker is the primary subject of the book's first chapter. Deemed a "miserable tribe of party etchers," these artists were basically hirelings who fed a growing market for prints on the fashions and scandals of Georgian society. Unlike the upper-class amateurs who dabbled in the design of prints for amusement, these professional satirists—with the exception of the watercolorist Thomas Rowlandson—were considered to be artistic hacks of low moral character, unworthy of critical attention. Even James Gillray, considered the most talented and renowned caricaturist of the period, was a figure at the very fringe of the art world. The strongest evidence for this is the paucity of contemporaneous writings on him or his work—the only accounts are by English and German correspondents for a German journal *London und Paris*. For today's scholars of eighteenth century caricature, Gillray is a figure of fascinating diversity and genius, full of ambiguity and discordant notes. Donald—who devotes much discussion to his work and reputation and reproduces many of his prints in color—writes, "Gillray, the inspired genius, Gillray the unprincipled hireling—like one of those puzzle drawings in which two different images are perceptible, but impossible to hold in the mind simultaneously, his caricatures caused, and still cause, an acute apprehension of disturbance and conflict." (41)

The author does a remarkable job of weaving together both the more well-known prints by Gillray and Rowlandson with the lesser known works by Dent, Dawe, Sayers, and others (as well as anonymous printmakers) to create a series of narratives that demonstrate how these prints inform our understanding of Georgian culture and social history. The subsequent chapters of *The Age of Caricature* are each succinct essays on various issues: the stylistic origins of caricature and its relation to the earlier emblematic prints of the first

You Rascal! dare to say this is not like Me.
and I'll make You eat it.
A GREAT BEAST.
Giles Grinagain inv. & f.
THE CARICATURIST'S APOLOGY.
Published as the Act directs by S. Howitt, No. 18 Rathbone Place, London.
He, that a Fool doth very wisely hit
Doth very foolishly, although he smart
Not to seem senseless of the bob. —
What Woman in the City do I name? —
Or what is he of basest function? —
Thinking that I mean him, but therein suits
His folly to the Mettle of my Speech? —
— if I do him right,
Then he hath wrong'd himself: if he be free,
Why then my taxing like a wild goose flies
Unclaim'd of any Man. —

'Giles Grinagain' [pseud.]: *The Caricaturist's Apology*. Published by S. Howitt, 1802. Hand-coloured etching.

half of the century; the complex attitudes towards fashion displayed in satirical prints and the link to the moral criticism of a dissolute aristocracy; depictions of the crowd and the gradual change from a celebration of its diversity and unruliness to the tendency to show more orderly, less threatening, public gatherings in the 1790s; and a look at the effects of the French Revolution on the production of caricature. Her epilogue, which focuses on the prints generated by the "massacre" at Peterloo in 1819, demonstrates that in a new era of idealistic reform, Georgian caricature, with its convention of exaggerated stereotype and unmitigated cynicism could not survive. The advent of illustrated political pamphlets and journals aimed at the middle and lower classes, and the rising popularity of family-oriented publications which incorporated straightforward illustrations also led to the decline. While Donald could not be expected to cover the entire story of the sixty years Georgian satirical prints (that would take several more volumes), she does chronicle the major trends and stylistic conventions of the medium and places them within a strong historically specific framework of events and attitudes with her impressive overview of the sheer crowded history of this wonderful period of humor, wit, and exuberant inventiveness. ●

Donald, Diana. *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1996. 248 p. index. ISBN 0-300-06605-8 (hbk). $60.00.

Graphic Storytelling

by Will Eisner

Reviewed by Joseph Witek

Until quite recently, students of the comics who were interested in investigating the specific formal attributes of comics found themselves in something of a bind. The tradition of comics scholarship in this country has been focused primarily on the history of comics and on the use of comics as evidence for hypotheses about American society, not on the textual practices of comics storytelling. The proposition that "comics show us who we are" has been so endemic in the critical discourse as to become an article of faith, while the notion that the narrative techniques by which comics tell their stories might be legitimate objects of study was not so much generally rejected as that it rarely seemed to occur to anybody in the first place. Comics were seen as valuable precisely because their meanings were so self-evident as to be accessible to the widest possible audience; any of the considerations usually called "artistic" or "aesthetic" were regarded as alien if not antithetical to the essence of the comics. In its extreme form this position becomes the anti-formalism of Karl E. Fortess: "But, in any event, the comic strip artist is not concerned with art problems, problems of form, spatial relationships, and the expressive movement of line. In fact, a concern with such problems would, in all probability, incapacitate the comic strip artist as such."[1]

Anyone attempting to buck the tradition of comics criticism from within academia faces the other horn of the dilemma: the trend in contemporary academic discourse, especially in the humanities, has been away from the formalist close readings that dominated literary studies from the 1950s to the 1970s to a new and equally pervasive attention to the cultural contexts and ideological implications of texts. Of course, such approaches were designed specifically to redress what were seen as the myopic and politically obtuse excesses of the New Criticism, but the formalist legacy of close attention to textual detail remains an integral part of contemporary interpretive procedures. For example, Fredric Jameson's reading of *Lord Jim* in *The Political Unconscious* takes its place in a well-developed critical discourse over against decades of formalist attention to Conrad's novels, and it deploys the techniques and interpretive vocabulary of close reading to new and overtly politicized ends. Comics, however, have had no such formalist tradition to react against, and even a critic who is interested primarily in interrogating the political and ideological dimensions of a comic is handicapped by the lack of a common technical and conceptual vocabulary for the analysis of comics narrative. The combination of the established—though often unarticulated—reflection theory of mainstream comics criticism and the contemporary academic prejudice against "text-bound" critical approaches amounts to a double whammy for students who are interested in the particulars of how comics work. There has not been much on the bookshelves to help them, and not much intellectual support if they attempt to blaze the trail themselves.

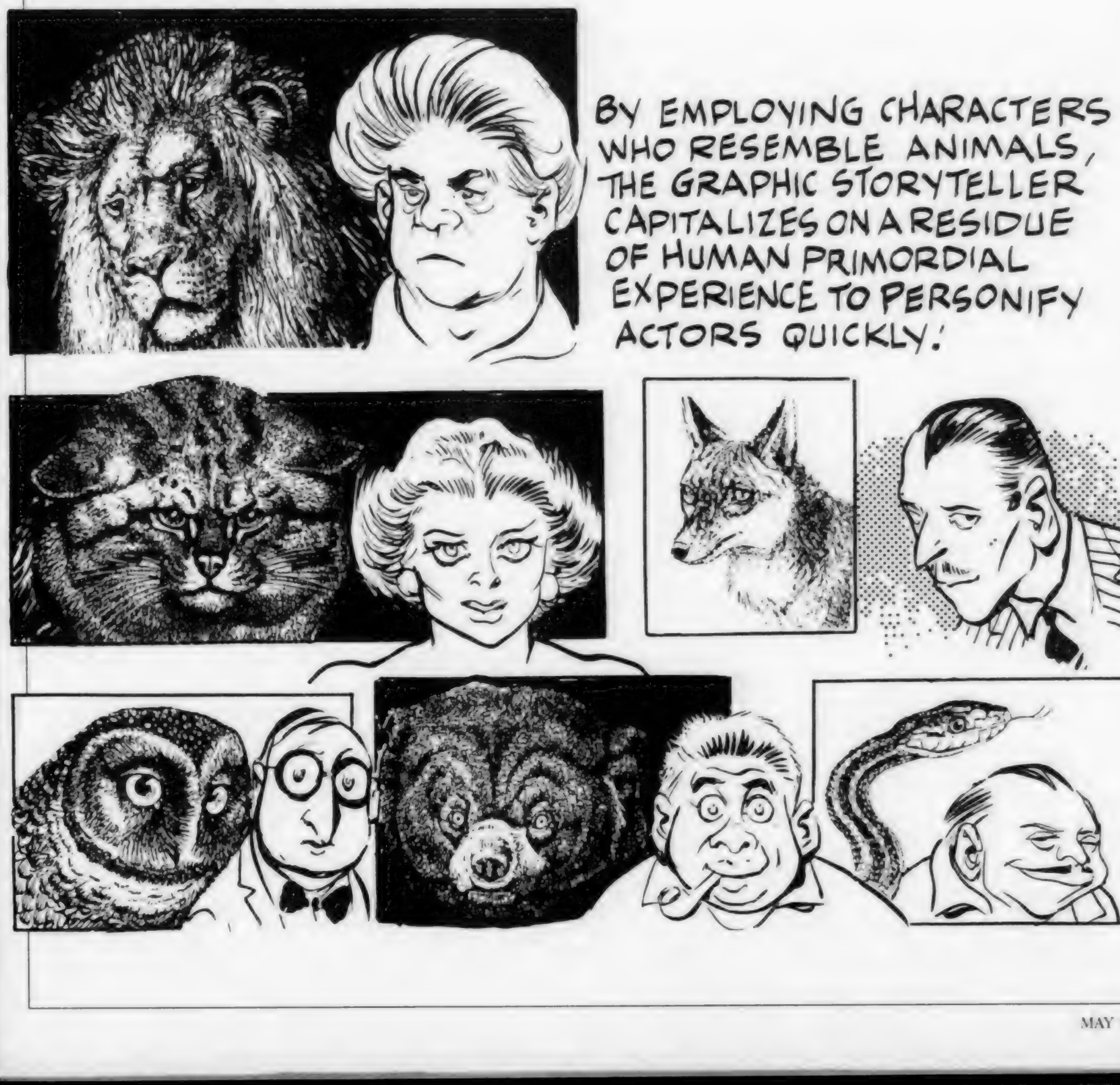
The first major redress for this paucity of critical attention to comics form in this country came from a source both surprising and surprisingly obvious: the master comics creator Will Eisner. The appearance of his *Comics & Sequential Art* (1985) was surprising because most comics practitioners have buttressed the idea of comics as a transparent medium by their tendency to speak of their craft as entirely intuitive and by typically denying that their creations had anything to do with "art" at all.[2] Yet it was obvious as well because Eisner has long been an exceptionally committed educator on the techniques of comics storytelling and an articulate spokesman in favor of the artistic potential of the comics medium. *Comics & Sequential Art*, while not the only methodical discussion in this country of the formal attributes of comics,[3] was a major and highly productive intervention into the critical discourse on comics. In *Comics & Sequential Art*, Eisner developed in detail a number of issues which had been ignored or discussed only briefly in the previous literature, including the interdependence of words and imagery, methods of timing within and between panels, and the use and functions of panel frames. His concept of "reader discipline"—the ways a creator prevents a reader from skipping ahead in the narrative—even adumbrates an embryonic reader-response theory for comics narrative.

Perhaps most pervasive of all in the critical discourse is the title phrase: "sequential art" has become the standard critical term for the overall narrative medium of comics. While it has been taken in some quarters as an attempt to dress up in pretentious jargon the embarrassing term "comics" (and its even more juvenile cousin "the funnies"), "sequential art" actually makes possible a crucial critical distinction between the comics medium itself and the comic strips and comic books which are its specific forms. For a long time "the comics" in popular culture discourse meant a collection of colorful characters and humorous or heroic themes, not a narrative medium, and the very existence of a specific term helps focus long-overdue attention on the medium of comics rather than on their content.

Eisner's legacy is readily apparent in the most important work of formalist comics criticism to date, Scott McCloud's enormously influential *Understanding Comics* (1993). Like Eisner a practicing cartoonist, McCloud takes up and expands Eisner's project of articulating the fundamentals of comics narrative. Both share an interest in first principles of artistic creation, in historical precedents for the narrative conventions of

comics, and in the nuts-and-bolts of storytelling with words and images. Where McCloud differs from Eisner is in his wider frame of reference (most of Eisner's examples in *Comics & Sequential Art* are taken from his own work) and in his more methodical—even hyper-Aristotelian—categorization of narrative techniques. Where Eisner refers by-the-way to varieties of visual style, McCloud constructs a mammoth pyramidal schematic on which, apparently, any conceivable drawing style can be placed. Eisner mentions the importance of panel transitions and of the connections between words and images; McCloud sorts those transitions and word/picture combinations into separate, fully defined categories, invents labels for them, and then makes graphs analyzing their use in the work of creators from around the world. But for all its wider program and its wealth of detail, *Understanding Comics* would not exist were it not for the pioneering formalist discus-

Graphic Storytelling by Will Eisner, 20.


BY EMPLOYING CHARACTERS WHO RESEMBLE ANIMALS, THE GRAPHIC STORYTELLER CAPITALIZES ON A RESIDUE OF HUMAN PRIMORDIAL EXPERIENCE TO PERSONIFY ACTORS QUICKLY:

sions in *Comics & Sequential Art*, as McCloud fully acknowledges in his opening pages.

McCloud's work in turn has been highly influential on comics criticism in this country. McCloud bills *Understanding Comics* straightforwardly as a stimulus to debate on the comics form, rather than as the last word. Indeed, while *Understanding Comics* has been critiqued and qualified on several grounds (especially on its grandiose theory of artistic creation), much subsequent critical discourse in this country has adopted McCloud's specific terms for narrative techniques, and terms such as "closure" (for the process of filling in gaps between panels) and "subject-to-subject transition" have begun to appear in print with no mention of McCloud at all. *Understanding Comics* has in fact achieved its goal of stimulating discussion of the formalist study of comics, and it seems likely that McCloud's formulations of many issues regarding comics storytelling will affect comics criticism for a long time to come.

Will Eisner's newest work likewise focuses on formal elements, but *Graphic Storytelling* is interested not just in the subject of comics but in the entire enterprise of telling stories using graphics. Though comics make up the bulk of the examples of graphic narrative, Eisner also mentions connections between film and comics, as well as storytelling in film, storyboards, and CD-Rom. The book's sections include chapters on story types, reader behavior and influences, the writing process, and types of narrators, among others. The work is, like *Comics & Sequential Art*, lavishly illustrated with examples from Eisner's published works and with stories drawn especially for this volume. Eisner clearly has taken to heart some of the criticism of the narrow range of examples in *Comics & Sequential Art* by including a section discussing the visual styles of other comics creators, including an extended sequence from Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*, along with briefer mentions of Art Spiegelman, Robert Crumb, Jean Giraud, and George Herriman, among others.

Like the earlier work, *Graphic Storytelling* is relatively loosely organized, with extended examples that are only briefly discussed. It is not clear, for example, that the premise that "a joke is the dramatization of a 'surprise'"[4] needs an eight-page story to illustrate it, even though "The Long Hit" is pleasant enough. But also as in *Comics & Sequential Art*, Eisner is sure to drop brilliant ideas along the way. Most compelling for me is Eisner's stress on the way images are not simply seen but actively read, that comics are both a visual and a literary medium simultaneously. Equally evocative is the proposition that the "partnership of words with imagery . . . is called comics and it fills a gap between print and film."[5]

Despite the inherent interest of its subject and the high quality of its presentation, *Graphic Storytelling* is for me something of a disappointment, however. The work itself, as always in Eisner's writings, is interesting, informative and intelligent, and had its ideas been integrated into *Comics & Sequential Art*, it rightfully could be hailed as a breakthrough. But *Graphic Storytelling* takes only the briefest note of the exciting developments in formalist discussions of comics in this country, including besides McCloud's book the treatment of aesthetic issues in recent historical works by Robert Harvey. In the post-*Understanding Comics* era, *Graphic Storytelling* represents a missed opportunity for Eisner to engage directly with the most recent ideas in the field which Eisner himself did so much to create.

After so many years in which no one talked seriously about the formal elements of comics at all, perhaps it is churlish to cavil about receiving the wisdom of one of the form's masters presented clearly and attractively. Yet as the discussion on comics form has proceeded, many new ideas have entered the critical discourse, and as a result much is omitted from *Graphic Storytelling* that would directly help serious students of the comics form. For example, Eisner mentions *Understanding Comics* approvingly in his opening pages, yet he never uses the McCloudian terminology nor addresses why he does not. While in its simple style and layperson's language *Graphic Storytelling* seems perhaps to be aimed at a more popular audience than McCloud's book, which itself was by no means academic, it is hard to imagine buyers of *Comics & Sequential Art* and *Graphic Storytelling* who are not also the audience for *Understanding Comics*. A focused discussion of whether Eisner finds McCloud's schema tenable and useful—and if he does not, why not—would be invaluable, as would a consideration of how Eisner, the master of pantomime action and wordless panels, regards Robert Harvey's theory that the pinnacle of comics achievement is the successful intertwining of words and pictures.

Even though it does not confront the most recent thinking on the formal elements of comics, *Graphic Storytelling* should find a place on the shelf of every collection of comics criticism right beside *Comics & Sequential Art*, to which it is truly a sequel. Eisner's ideas by themselves are always worth hearing, and it is a tribute to Eisner himself that his ideas on the formalist analysis of comics do not stand by themselves anymore. ●

Eisner, Will. *Graphic Storytelling*. Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press. 1995. 164 p. 0-9614728-2-0 (ppr) $24.95; 0-9614728-3-9 (hbk) $34.95.

NOTES:

1. Karl E. Fortess, "The Comics as Non-Art," in *The Funnies: An American Idiom*, ed. David Manning White and Robert H. Abel (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 112.

2. See for example the many disclaimers against artistic pretensions and the self-denigrating comments by cartoonists in Martin Sheridan's *Comics and Their Creators* (1947; reprint, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1977).

3. A distinction it shares with Lawrence L. Abbott's "Comic Art: Characteristics and Potentialities of a Narrative Medium," *Journal of Popular Culture* 19 (Spring 1986): 155-173.

4. Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling* (Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press, 1995), 102.

5. Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*.

Contributors

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Basic endnote style is as follows:

1. Rebecca Zurier, *Art for The Masses* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 89. [Note that no abbreviation precedes the page numbers.]

2. Alice Sheppard, "There Were Ladies Present: American Women Cartoonists and Comic Artists in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of American Culture* 7 (Fall 1984): 38-48.

3. Bill Blackbeard and Martin WIlliams, eds. *The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 12.

4. George Newton Gordon, "Can Children Corrupt Our Comics?" in *The Funnies: An American Idiom* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 158-166.

5. Edwin McDowell, "America Is Taking Comic Books Seriously," *New York Times*, 31 July 1988, E8.

Style for second references:

1. Zurier, *Art for the Masses*, 66.

2. Sheppard, "There Were Ladies Present," 44.

3. Gordon, "Can Children Corrupt Our Comics?" 164.

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